

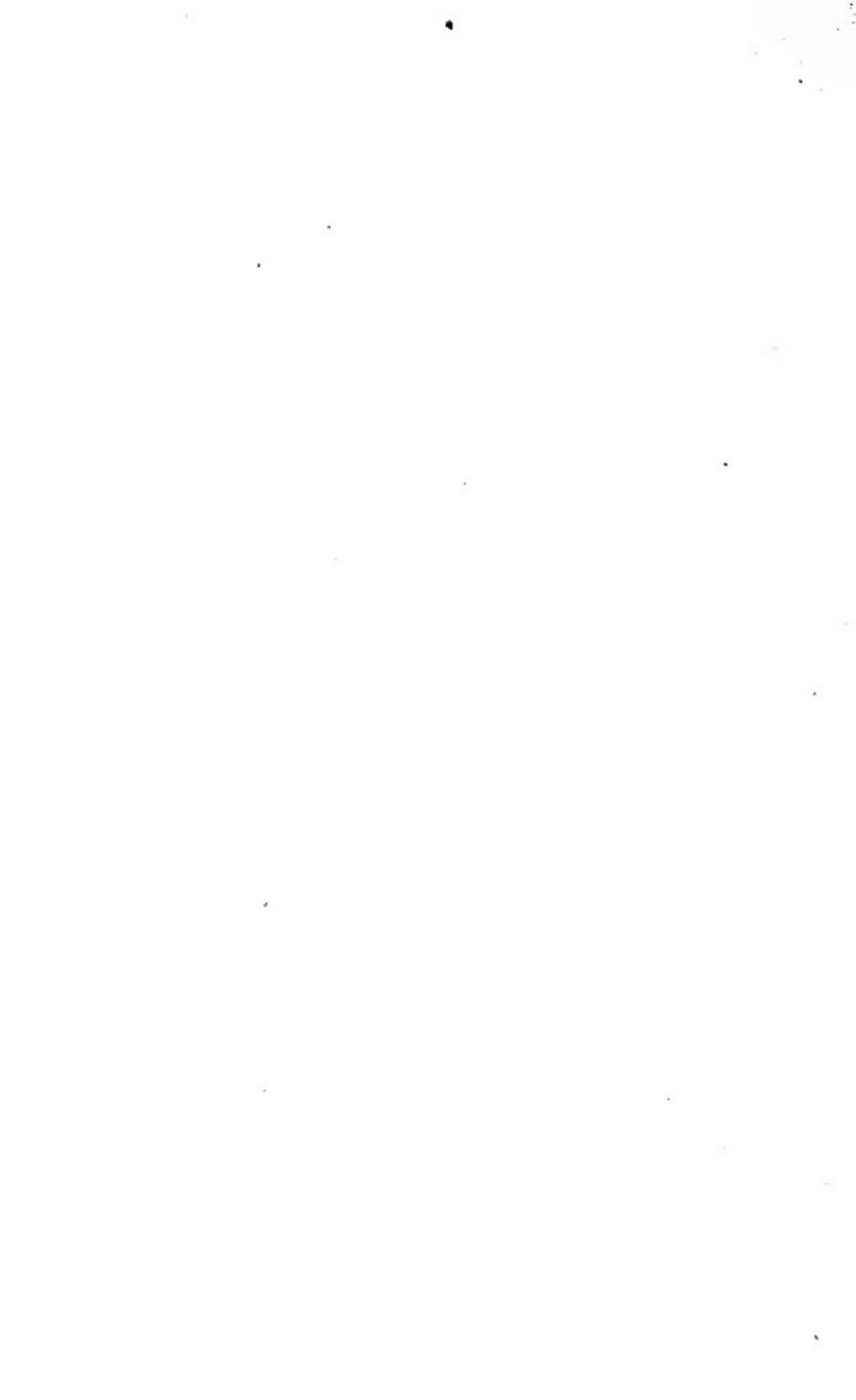
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The Popular  
Library of Art

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

For most of the biographical matter in the present volume I have drawn on Nichols' and Steevens' "The Genuine Works of William Hogarth: Illustrated with Biographical Anecdotes," 3 vols., 1808-10-17, the chief storehouse of Hogarthiana. Mr Austin Dobson's classic Life, "William Hogarth," which will never be superseded, I have consulted in the folio edition, Heinemann, 1902. My grateful acknowledgments to Mr Dobson are made in the text; I have also to thank my friend Mr Muirhead Bone and Mr Francis Dodd for some kind suggestions.



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*NOTE.—Mr W. Heinemann has kindly granted facilities in the use of negatives of pictures reproduced in Mr Austin Dobson's "William Hogarth."*

1902.



## I

## HOGARTH'S PLACE AND POPULARITY

HOGARTH, in point of creative force, imagination and range the greatest of the British masters, holds an ill-defined place in the ranks of our artists. The favourite of our eighteenth century public, his engravings were prized by European collectors, and his vogue at home was greater than that of all the English artists of his period put together. Yet the connoisseurs who posed as the patrons of "the Arts" and the guardians of "Taste" refused to admit that "the matchless Mr Hogarth," universally cried up as a rare genius, was a great painter. His style was what was then termed "the Low," a branch of art admittedly secondary to "the Sublime," or the "grand historical style," which he had once essayed and failed in.<sup>1</sup> He was "the ingenious and

<sup>1</sup> "His genius, however, it must be owned, was  
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## HOGARTH

ingenuous Mr Hogarth," a man unsound and illiterate in his views, who decried the Old Masters, and even had pretensions to rival the great Vandyke and the "divine Correggio."<sup>1</sup> Hogarth had warm patrons among the aristocracy and received private commissions from a wide circle, 1730-1760, but the virtuosi wagged their heads knowingly, subscribed for the artist's engravings, and refused to buy his pictures.<sup>2</sup> With few exceptions, his famous

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suited only to *low* or *familiar* subjects. It never soared above *common* life: to subjects naturally sublime, or which from antiquity or other accidents borrowed dignity, he could not rise."—*Gilpin.*

<sup>1</sup> Provoked at this language, I, one day, at the Academy in St Martin's Lane, put the following question: "Supposing any man at this time were to paint pictures as well as Vandyke, would it be seen or acknowledged, and could the artist enjoy the benefit or acquire the reputation due to his performance?" They asked me in reply, "if I could paint one as well"; and I frankly answered, "I believed I could."

<sup>2</sup> For the four series, *The Harlot's Progress*, *The Rake's Progress*, the *Marriage A-la-Mode*, the *Four Parts of the Day*, and the *Strolling Actresses*, twenty-five pictures in all, Hogarth received £553, 7s.

## HOGARTH

“Dramatic Paintings,” the engraved versions of which had delighted the town, sold for small sums, and in his last years, when the bad reception accorded to “The Analysis of Beauty,” the scurrilous attacks on his *Sigismunda*, and the rise of a new school, all had affected his position, Wilkes could aver with impunity “his historical or portrait pieces are now considered as almost beneath criticism.” Even so, his claim to rank as a great *painter* as well as a great genius must have been acceded after his death, had not the æsthetic revolution brought about by Sir Joshua Reynolds and his school accentuated this misunderstanding.<sup>1</sup> When one school of poetry drives out another,

<sup>1</sup> The rise of Hogarth’s reputation as *painter* may be illustrated by the following table of prices fetched :—

[Mr Austin Dobson’s *Catalogue.*]

	1801.	1832.	1884.
<i>Lavinia Fenton as Polly Peachum</i> . . .	£5 7 6	£52 10 0	£840 0 0
	1790.	1832.	1884.
<i>The Shrimp Girl</i> . . .	£4 10 0	£44 2 0	£262 10 0
	1790.		
<i>Hogarth’s Six Servants</i> . £5 15 6		...	...
			1891.
<i>The Gate of Calais</i> . . .	...	...	£2752 10 0

## HOGARTH

the erst fashionable classic sinks for a time neglected, but Hogarth's *paintings* had never been acclaimed. The brilliant achievements of Gainsborough, Reynolds and other English masters dazzled English society, and even the critics who professed high admiration for Hogarth's genius echoed the old fallacy.<sup>1</sup> In

<sup>1</sup> "His works are his history ; as a painter he had but slender merit."—*Horace Walpole*.

"In composition we see little in him to admire. . . . Of the *distribution of light* Hogarth had as little knowledge as of *composition*. . . . Neither was Hogarth a master of *drawing*. . . . We have very few examples of graceful attitudes. With instances of *picturesque grace* his works abound. Of his *expression* in which the force of his genius lay we cannot speak in terms too high."—*Gilpin*.

"It is the Satirist, not the Artist, we admire in Hogarth."—*Bartsch*.

"On canvas he was not so successful as on copper."—*John Ireland*.

"It cannot indeed be truly said of Hogarth that he improved the practice of the arts of Painting and Engraving which he professed."—*John Phillips, R.A.*

"Elegance of composition and picturesque effect were but secondary considerations with one whose principal object was not so much to flatter the eye with forms of majesty and beauty, or the splendour

## HOGARTH

successive generations Hogarth's art in the sobriety of its technique, in the robustness of its realism, in its unflinching delineation of the actual passions and humours of human nature, grew more and more out of favour. After the death of Reynolds (1790), the official mainstream of British art, landscape excepted, from Lawrence to Landseer, and from Landseer to Leighton, flowed steadily in the direction of the Pretty, the Poetic, and the Idealistic. The Victorian domesticities, shrinking before Hogarth the satirist, ignored the *painter*, and even Ruskin, whose life ambition it was to construct the Temple of Art with the honest bricks of ethics, scarcely mentions Hogarth at all in the whole of his polemical teachings. This need not surprise us in a teacher who said of Rembrandt "it was his aim to paint the foulest things he could see—by rushlight"; and of Canaletto, "the mannerism of Canaletto is the most degraded that I know in the whole history of

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of colouring, the magic of chiaroscuro and deceptive imitation, as to inform the mind."—"Essay on the Genius and Works of Hogarth." Folio edition of Hogarth's Plates. 1822.

## HOGARTH

art.” In the pre-Raphaelite revolt (1850), against Academical insincerity and inanity, only one man, Madox Brown, who was himself not one of the “Brotherhood,” speaks of Hogarth’s great art with enthusiasm. It is true that two of the best English essayists of the nineteenth century, Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt, in 1811 and 1814 respectively, penned on Hogarth pieces of criticism which for illuminating insight and force of appreciation are the highest testimony any English master has received from authors of critical genius. But in spite of their testimony and in spite of that of a few critics of weight, at a much later day<sup>1</sup> Hogarth’s claims as a great painter, in virtue of his composition, drawing and colour, were steadily ignored by the authorities responsible for the National Gallery. While *The Marriage A-la-Mode* and Hogarth’s *Portrait* by himself came into the nation’s possession through the purchase by Parliament of part of the Augerstein Collection in 1824, according to the official catalogue not a single Hogarth was purchased for a period of sixty

<sup>1</sup> And still later by Sir William Armstrong and Mr Sydney Colvin.

## HOGARTH

years! till in 1884 the *Portrait of Miss Fenton* and *The Shrimp Girl* were acquired. And yet during this period many of the finest Hogarths were changing hands at public auctions for small sums.<sup>1</sup> Since 1884, three Hogarths (in 1892, 1898, 1904) have been purchased, a period during which several hundred thousand pounds have been expended on Raphael, Holbein, Van Dyck, Moroni, Franz Hals, etc., and the *Portrait of Admiral Pulido-Peregrina* (by Mazo<sup>2</sup>). That the National Gallery possesses fifteen fine Hogarths is due to the luck of legacies.

This official neglect during the Victorian era of our first great national painter was but a reflex of the general social movement towards “elegance” and genteel refinement. The generation that buried Sir Thomas Lawrence in St Paul’s Cathedral (1820) with the pomp and ceremony befitting a national hero, and the generation that looked on Barry’s Houses

<sup>1</sup> *The Shrimp Girl* sold in 1832 for £44, 2s.

*The Sleeping Congregation* sold in 1875 for £94, 10s.

*The Laughing Audience* sold in 1848 for £51, 9s.  
—Mr Austin Dobson’s “William Hogarth.”

## HOGARTH

of Parliament and the Clock Tower as a *chef-d'œuvre* in architecture (1852), found no place for Hogarth's manly, outspoken and unpretentious art in its reception rooms. The Englishman of the period was in process of sloughing off the Georgian skin beneath his Victorian clothes. Byronism and Walter Scott had freed him from eighteenth century formalism, the Lake poets had helped his soul to grow, and the main movement in literature and the arts was shot through and through with idealism. In the minor channel of British art, in caricature and popular satire, we see John Bull's grossness finding extravagant vent in the prints of Rowlandson and Gillray (1790-1820), and then purging and taking its solace in the half-way house of Cruikshank. In the most popular realistic pictures of Victorian life—as Dickens illustrated by Cruikshank—realism and romanticism and idealism are inextricably fused. While in the *Keepsakes* and *Books of Beauty* and other annuals, pseudo-romanticism, sham orientalism, and simpering prettiness were all the rage, Hogarth has nothing to say to the mild satire of a Doyle, a Leech, or a Du Maurier. Hogarth

## HOGARTH

continued to decline in popular favour during the fifties, sixties, and seventies, and the average Victorian "cultured" attitude towards him is perhaps best hit off by a passage from Mrs Oliphant, which Mr Austin Dobson prints in his "Bibliography." "Before his pictures the vulgar laugh, and the serious spectator holds his peace, gazing often with eyes awestricken at the wonderful unimpassioned tragedy. But never a tear comes at Hogarth's call. *It is his sentence of everlasting expulsion from the highest heaven of art.*"

This practical neglect of Hogarth, painter and craftsman, is illustrated by the curious fact that there is no work which throws any real light on the great painter's development, on his styles, or on his aesthetic qualities, apart from the admirable, critical sketch of his technique, by Sir Walter Armstrong.<sup>1</sup> Though every modern critic in turn speaks of

<sup>1</sup> ". . . I think it is safe to say that of no considerable painter has so little been written in his primitive capacity of an artist."—"The Art of Hogarth," by Sir Walter Armstrong. Introduction to "William Hogarth," by Austin Dobson. Folio. 1902.

## HOGARTH

Hogarth's masterly handling, two-thirds of his work have never been even cursorily examined. Any such examination would necessitate not only a visit to a hundred and more private collections in various parts of England, but a familiarity with Georgian painting anterior to Sir Joshua Reynolds, to which none of our art critics have, as yet, laid claim. The literary side of the subject, thoroughly explored a century ago, by John Nichols and George Stevens, has been brought up to date by Mr Austin Dobson in his masterly biography, but an exhaustive critical examination of the canvases seems as far off as ever—and, indeed, is a work which requires the insight and experience of a number of heads. The present writer has, certainly, scant pretensions to offer in face of the general silence. To criticize Hogarth as a craftsman pure and simple, as the great pictorial commentator on the social life of early and mid-Georgian England, as the only great painter-psychologist of the human passions we have had—the harmonious fusion of these three legitimate lines of exposition calls for a most rare endowment in the critic. But it is well that students

## HOGARTH

of Hogarth should begin to shift their ground and direct attention to the aesthetic rather than to the literary interest of his creations. It is perhaps not surprising that the Royal Academy, in the course of the hundred and forty-two years of its existence, should never have devoted an Exhibition to the works of our first, and, in many respects, our greatest English master.<sup>1</sup> We may be grateful that twenty-nine Hogarths were brought together in the Winter Exhibition of 1908. But we look to the National Loan directors to step into the breach. Surely as regards this great master, who rescued British art from the stigma of being a feeble echo of foreign voices, our charity should begin at home?

<sup>1</sup> “As to electing presidents, directors, professors, etc., I considered it as a ridiculous imitation of the foolish parade of the French Academy. . . . But I never could learn that the arts were benefited. . . . The real motive is that a few bustling characters, who have access to people of rank, think they can thus get a superiority over their brethren, be appointed to places and have salaries as in France. . . .”—*Hogarth*.

## II

## HOGARTH'S FAMILY, YOUTH AND FIRST STEPS

WILLIAM HOGARTH, born in London, November 10, 1697, came of Westmoreland yeoman stock. His father, Richard Hogarth, a school-master, who had migrated to London about 1690, to mend his fortunes, was the son of a yeoman farmer of the vale of Bampton. Hogarth's uncle Thomas, "Auld Hogart" of Troutbeck, according to Adam Walker's account, communicated to John Nichols, "was remarkable for his talent at provincial poetry. . . . He was as critical an observer of Nature as his nephew, for the narrow field he had to view her in. Not an incident or absurdity in the neighbourhood escaped him. If anyone was hardy enough to break through any decorum of old and established repute, if anyone attempted to over-reach his neighbour, or cast a leering eye at his wife, he was sure

## HOGARTH

to hear himself sung over the whole parish, nay, to the very boundaries of the Westmoreland dialect! so his songs were said to have a greater effect on the manners of his neighbourhood than even the sermons of the parson himself." George Stevens, the assistant editor of "The Biographical Anecdotes," who is responsible for much malicious and, indeed, malignant comment on Hogarth's life, states that "Auld Hogart's" poems were characterized "by want of grammar, metre, sense and decency." But the specimens that have escaped the censorship of a Victorian editor in 1850 do not permit us to judge of Auld Hogart's satiric powers. Hogarth's father, Richard, was "a man of parts"; he composed two Latin school-books and a Latin dictionary, which last, though never published, elicited "letters of approbation from the greatest scholars in England, Scotland and Ireland. But these flattering testimonies produced no profit to the author." His mother's maiden name was Gibbons, but nothing more is known of her except the record of her death: "June 11, 1735, died Mrs Hogarth, mother to the celebrated painter, of a fright occasioned by

## HOGARTH

the fire in St Martin's Lane." Fortunately Hogarth's portrait of her (Mr David Rothschild) has been preserved! She sits, an elderly woman of powerful build, bolt upright on a broad seat, her well-kept house-wifely hands crossed on her lap. Her head, held with dignity, speaks of the strong character and solid virtues of a stock, the substantial yeoman trading class, which in its old-fashioned independence and staying power was long "the backbone of the nation." A woman who relies on herself and is not deceived by life, prudent, placid, and just, with energy and resolution veiled in the glance of motherly pride with which she is, a little anxiously, following the painter's movements. The calm, self-contained air Hogarth wears in his *Portrait of Himself* (National Gallery) derives from his mother's side, even as the round face and short nose march with the same features in his *Portrait of his Sister* (National Gallery). The three portraits, studied together, depict admirably the social origins of Hogarth and his forebears.

Both Auld Hogarth and his nephew William might be characterized in the words of another



WILLIAM HOGARTH

FROM THE ORIGINAL PAINTING NATIONAL GALLERY



## HOGARTH

north countryman, Ben Jonson: "Of an ingenious and free spirit; ever and constant in reproof, without fear, controlling the world's abuses. One whom no servile hope of gain or frosty apprehension of danger can make to be a parasite, either to time, place or opinion." A less pleasing side of this type of solid character, compact of honesty and obstinacy, is hit off in Defoe's "The True-born Englishman":—

"And every grace but charity they have . . .  
If your mistakes their ill opinion gain  
No merit can their favour re-obtain."

There is no vein of gentle blood or breeding in Hogarth's attitude. He is the middle-class Englishman of his period, sound and hearty, with the intensity of genius informing in the strangest manner a John Bullish bluntness and down-rightness which rejoices in its insular limitations. More than any author of his period Hogarth reflects the national temperament in the bulk, from the battle of Blenheim to the loss of the American Colonies (1773). With the traditions and interests of the English aristocracy Hogarth has nothing to do. In his few portraits of titled people

## HOGARTH

we see simply the man or woman with no stress laid on refinement or breeding. In this he is the antithesis of Reynolds, who is the mirror of the culture, charm and spirit of the English aristocracy.

In Horace Walpole's Correspondence, 1731-1797, lives the society that Reynolds immortalised: but outside this elect circle is the body of the nation, and to the habits, manners, pursuits, pleasures, passions of Georgian London, Hogarth is the infallible guide.

Of the first thirty years of Hogarth's life practically nothing is known but his own brief account—his passion, as a lad, for drawing, his apprenticeship to a silversmith, his work as an engraver of copper prints.<sup>1</sup> “It

<sup>1</sup> “I had naturally a good eye, and a fondness for drawing; shows of all sorts gave me uncommon pleasure when an infant; and mimicking, common to all children, was remarkable in me. An early access to a neighbouring painter drew my attention from play; and I was, at every possible opportunity, employed in making drawings. . . . I saw the difficulties under which my father laboured. . . . It was therefore very conformable to my wishes that I was taken from school, and served a long apprenticeship to a silver-plate engraver. I soon



HOGARTH'S SISTER

FROM THE ORIGINAL PAINTING (NATIONAL GALLERY)



## HOGARTH

may be presumed that he began business, says John Nichols," "on his own account at least as early as the year 1720; and his first em-

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found this business in every respect too limited. . . . I found that the beauty and delicacy of the stroke in engraving was not to be learnt without much practice, and demanded a larger portion of patience than I felt myself disposed to exercise. . . . I thought it still more unlikely, that by pursuing the common method, and copying *old* drawings, I could ever attain the power of making *new* designs, which was my first and greatest ambition. I therefore endeavoured to habituate myself to the exercise of a sort of technical memory, and by repeating in my own mind the parts of which objects were composed, I could by degrees combine and put them down with my pencil. Thus . . . I had one material advantage over my competitors, viz., the early habit I thus acquired of retaining in the mind's eye, without coldly copying it on the spot, whatever I intended to imitate. . . . I have ever found studying from nature the shortest and safest way of attaining knowledge in my art. . . . The instant I became master of my own time I determined to qualify myself in engraving on copper. In this I readily got employment; and frontispieces to books, such as prints to Hudibras, in twelves, etc., soon brought me into the way."

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ployment seems to have been the engraving of arms and shop-bills." Between 1721 and 1732 Hogarth "designed and furnished" a number of copper-plate illustrations for the booksellers, most of which are derivative in style and of mediocre quality. His early prints, such as *The Lottery* (1721), *An Emblematical Print on the South Sea Scheme* (1721), *Royalty, Episcopacy and Law* (1724), are political and social satires in the accepted fashion of the day, "cartoons" as we should now style them, hitting off passing events, a form of commentary of which Georgian society was specially fond. It is under the year 1725 that we first note a characteristically Hogarthian design, the charming *Old Frock Shop*, executed as a shop-bill for his sisters, Mary and Ann Hogarth, forming a beautifully balanced group, though the *Two Sides of a Sign for a Paviour*, drawn and painted in early youth, by their vigorous unaffected realism show an original, uncompromising talent at work. When did Hogarth first begin to paint? All that we know is contained in his statement that when he was twenty (1717), the paintings of Greenwich Hospital "then going on," by Sir

## HOGARTH

James Thornhill, "ran in my head," and that he attended the latter painter's academy for students, opened about 1724. In this year Hogarth published his "Masquerades and Operas," a print which satirized "the reigning follies," among which figures Kent, the architect of the Horse Guards, a painter, sculptor, landscape gardener responsible for much mediocre work of his day, who had, moreover, perpetrated a ridiculous Altar-piece for St Clement Danes, Strand. With his Burlesque plate of Kent's design Hogarth attracted public attention as a satirist (1725). The Burlesque print is richly comic, with its heavenly choir of three muscular she-angels struggling to keep time on an organ, a harp and a lute, while grotesque cherubs flutter around, and the Holy Ghost hovers above on wooden pinions. It is conjectured that Sir James Thornhill, delighted with this satire on his rival in the King's favour, admitted Hogarth to his intimacy; but what is certain is that Hogarth eloped, three years later, with the Serjeant-Painter's daughter, Jane Thornhill, and married her, March 23, 1729. The list of prints produced by Hogarth up to this date shows him quick

## HOGARTH

to seize and study the interest of the town on current topics. The large *Masquerade Ticket* (1727), which attacks the ingenious Mr Heidegger and Masked Balls (for the morals of which see "Tom Jones," Book XIII., chap. viii.), is one of a long sequence of Hogarth's onslaughts on the foreign opera singers, artists and musicians that were fashionable in early Georgian society. The free and natural movement of the crowd of sauntering masqueraders in this plate reveals that Hogarth was now an accomplished draughtsman; and that he was recognized also as a painter we know not only by a commission given him to paint *Twelve Pictures of Hudibras*,<sup>1</sup> but from the suit he brought in

<sup>1</sup> Mr Austin Dobson tells us that the East Haddon set of the *Twelve Pictures of Hudibras* are "supposed to have been painted by Hogarth subsequent to the issue of the large series of prints, 1726?" The three oil panels of the Hudibras designs, exhibited in the R.A. Winter Exhibition of 1908 by Mrs Howard Stormont, seem, however, far too mellow in tone and colouring to be such early work. A mystery hangs over Hogarth's indebtedness to skilful foreigners (? Heemskirk, Van Der Gucht,

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May, 1727, by which he obtained £30 damages against one Joshua Morris, an upholsterer, for non-payment of a design on canvas, representing *The Element of Earth*. Hogarth's witnesses included Sir James Thornhill and other painters. We may conclude from this suit, as well as from his seathing remarks on the "monopoly of print-sellers equally mean and destructive to the ingenious," which pirated his prints, vending them "at half-price while the original prints were returned to me again," that Hogarth was already at war with "the Trade." His sturdy independence and boldness of mind made it impossible that his avenue to fame should be that merely of patronage. The Fine Arts were at this date held to be a province reserved for the elect, who practised a multitude of Rules derived from obsequious study of the Ancients. Probably Hogarth had already shocked his

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Lepipre),\* who may have helped him to execute his commissions for paintings from the set of Hudibras prints, the designs of which he himself had largely adapted from the work of an unknown predecessor in 1710.

\* The subject is one for experts in the future.

## HOGARTH

would-be Patrons by declaring boldly what he afterwards wrote, that the Painter should study nature on which all the Rules were founded.<sup>1</sup> But it was inevitable that as a great innovator of genius he should soon make his appeal to the public at large, which knew nothing of the Rules. And it was inevitable that, depending on this public, the satiric, moral and anecdotic humour of his engravings should obscure the æsthetic appeal of the painter. Nevertheless it is as a painter that Hogarth now and hence-forward regards himself, and from this date nearly every work he undertakes, of importance or not, he executes on canvas, afterwards engraving it, or handing to others to engrave, if there be a popular market.

1 “ . . . would gentlemen but venture to see with their own eyes. Let but the comparison of Pictures with Nature be their only guide, and let them judge as freely of Painting as they do of Poetry . . . Sir James Thornhill, in a too modest compliance with the connoisseurs of his time, called in the assistance of Mr Andrea, a foreigner, famous for the justness of his outline, to paint the Royal Family at the upper end of Greenwich-Hall. . . . ”—*Hogarth*.

### III

#### THE CONVERSATION PIECES

HOGARTH tells us that up to the age of thirty he could do little more than maintain himself, but that shortly after his marriage he commenced "Painter of small Conversation Pieces from twelve to fifteen inches high; which having novelty succeeded for a few years." An anonymous critic has recently animadverted with severity upon these performances, without taking into consideration the degraded state into which painting had fallen, at a time when nearly every native artist seems to be struggling with an atmosphere of heavy and monotonous formalism. A typical example is Hamilton's *A Club of Artists in 1735* (National Portrait Gallery),<sup>1</sup> a conscientious performance, as

<sup>1</sup> "We frankly confess that when one or two examples of this kind were shown at the Academy

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Kent's pompous, hesitating expression testifies, but laboured to a degree and destitute of style. As we have said, the subject of the British painters (1700-1750) is one that modern critics have carefully shunned. In portraiture the abominably insipid style of the foreigner, Kneller, was triumphant, but that the elements existed for the arrival of a sincere and natural school of realists is shown by the original feeling of the work of Thomas Murray (d. 1724), Thomas Hill (d. 1734), Thomas Gibson (d. 1751), and Stephen Slaughter (d. 1765). Sir Walter Armstrong, in discussing this struggle between the fashionable foreigner and the native-born artists, has well said, "It was not a healthy struggle. It was between men patronized for their foreign birth—as artists of all kinds have ever been in England—and

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Winter Exhibition of 1908, we were appalled by their woodenness. It seemed in no way less than that observable in Hogarth's confessed failures in the Grand Style; the drama at which the artist aimed came perilously near to the burlesque that his enemies taunted him with; the movement of the figures was the arrested movement of the jointed doll."—*The Nation*, Feb. 5, 1910.

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men who thought their only chance of success lay in imitating the methods of their rivals. Thus we always had mediocrity on one hand and insincerity on the other."<sup>1</sup> Hogarth, however, from the very first wars on convention, as we see in his first original painting, *The Wanstead Assembly* (1728). Here one finds an engaging naïvete born of the painter's uncompromising honesty and inexperience. In this ornate, chandeliered Georgian saloon, with its stiff little groups of card players, tea drinkers, and children playing with a dog, we have a document of upper-middle-class life that is highly amusing. The plebeian faces of the relatives and friends of Richard Child, first Earl of Tylney, the rich banker's ennobled son, are caught with an unflattering humour almost cruel. Despite its dry rigidity and lack of atmosphere, the painter's awkward realism affects us, for he is both critical and intent on setting down exactly what he sees. Certain details of drawing, such as the card players absorbed in their game, and the character of the standing group of the girl and her father

<sup>1</sup> "Art in Great Britain and Ireland." By Sir Walter Armstrong, p. 179.

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and mother, betray the born psychologist. *The Committee of the House of Commons Examining Bambridge* (1729) (National Portrait Gallery) is elementary in technique, but it has individuality, and the feeling of the prison's gloomy walls is rendered skilfully. For the stiffness of the grouping Hogarth, however, is not responsible, as there is luckily extant the original oil sketch (Fitzwilliam Museum), which is full of nervous movement, the line of the commissioners seated in chairs at the table balancing admirably the heads of those opposite which are eagerly turned towards Bambridge. The commissioners, however, no doubt were not satisfied with portraits of their backs, and the official "full face" version is accordingly cumbrous and mediocre in its grouping. In how many Conversation Pieces must the painter not have struggled over a like difficulty with his sitters! Far more resourceful in execution is the *Scene from the Beggar's Opera* (1728-9?) (National Gallery), which shows admirable ease and feeling for movement. In judging the Conversation Pieces, we have to remember that Hogarth looked upon them as pot-boilers—"still but a less kind of drudgery," he com-

THE COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS  
EXAMINING BAMBIDGE





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plains. What his patrons required, no doubt, were simply passable likenesses of a group of people; but Hogarth himself is struggling to make a real picture of the scene, and often the onerous conditions of lighting, the disposition of the furniture, the perspective, etc., prove too much for the painter working against time. "I could not bring myself to act like some of my brethren and make it a sort of manufactory, to be carried on by the help of background and drapery painters," he expressly states. Moreover, various of these Conversation Pieces have the air of being eked out from memory and from insufficient memoranda, the wooden "setness" of the figures being thus accounted for, as in the case of the weak and frigid *Shelley Family*, a pure pot-boiler. Little better is *The Walpole Family*, a group of five people, in which the presentment of Horace Walpole standing by a tea-table does not flatter that lover of the arts. A stronger, but dry and harsh canvas, signed 1730, is *Dudley Woodbridge, Esq., and Captain Holland* (G. Harland Peek, Esq.), an interior which is redeemed by the clever study of the face of a hard drinker. In all these early pieces lurks, indeed, the satirist,

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who with one touch of the brush humorously comments on human foibles. *The Wollaston Family* (1730), for example, with its dry emphasis on the unbecoming caps and coiffure of the women, is a most malicious testimony to the abiding and unbecoming virtues of British family life. In *The Wedding of Stephen Beckingham and Mary Cox* (1729), the acute observer has given himself more liberty, the bridegroom's self-consciousness and the appropriate bearing of the clergyman and the parents being hit off with gusto. Sometimes we are faced by a deliciously quaint domestic study, as in *The Misses Cotton and their Niece* (Rev. W. J. Stracey Clitheroe), absolutely Hogarthian in its blend of truth and caricature. The homeliness of these excellent spinsters, gowned in green, blue and puce silk, redolent of all the careful domesticities, points the moral to the shy niece, whose frightened air and stiff backbone speak of the infinite care bestowed on her upbringing. *A Music Party* (Fitzwilliam Museum), which has more charm than many, has the happy, fortuitous air of life, the musicians and the 'cello introducing a rich note in contrast with the pettiness and rigidity

A MUSIC PARTY





## HOGARTH

of the Georgian ladies, and the standing figure breaking up the composition artfully. The difference in quality between Hogarth's hack commissions and work done *con amore* may be judged from the engraving of the panel of *The Politician* (1730), a most firm and highly-wrought character study, and those given in S. Ireland's "Graphic Illustrations" of *The Rich Family* (1728), and *Governor Rogers and Family* (1729), with their artificial formality and strained poses. And yet in these first three years of painting, Hogarth must have won no slight reputation, for, according to Mr Austin Dobson, Mrs Pendarves writes to Mrs Anne Granville, July 13, 1731 : "I have released Lady Sunderland from her promise of giving me her picture by Zinek, to have it done by Hogarth. I think he takes a much greater likeness." This testimony is supported by the fact that in this year Hogarth was given a commission of some importance by Mr Conduitt, the Master of the Mint, viz., to paint a representation of private theatricals in which the children of the Royal Family performed before a small, aristocratic audience. This picture, *The Conquest of Mexico*, which has been warmly praised

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by Leslie and Sir Walter Armstrong for its ingenious composition<sup>1</sup> and pleasing colouring is, in a lesser degree, marked by the same stiffness and by the flatness of tone of all the early paintings. We must grant that many of these Conversation Pieces, painted from nature, have neither the spontaneous charm of a free sketch nor the fulness and force of a finished picture. Hogarth is always at his best in catching characteristic movement and gesture, and at his worst in portraying set postures. The *Conquest of Mexico*, however, marks a turning-point in Hogarth's art. Up to this date his pictures give the impression of a painter who is oppressed by his subject, and by his own literalness and sincerity. It was no doubt his dissatisfaction with this class of

<sup>1</sup> Sir Walter Armstrong singles out for praise "the lady in white in the audience, who stoops and busies herself with the children sitting on the floor before her. Nothing could be more real, more probable, more inevitable, I might say, than her action and the way in which it knits the vague interests of the small people and the complacency of their elders, and yet as a detail of the pattern it is exactly what is required both in line and tone."—Essay on "The Art of Hogarth."

A HARLOT'S PROGRESS. (PLATE I)

FROM HOGARTH'S ORIGINAL ENGRAVING





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work rather than the difficulty of pleasing his patrons that determined him to strike out in the new, original style of his "dramatic paintings"; whereby, while relying on his observation of nature, he could select for treatment any scene or subject that called forth his creative imagination. No English painter had ever attempted this style before, and no one has signally succeeded in it since, though Wilkie is a fair second. Hogarth continued to paint large Conversation Pieces, at intervals, during his lifetime, though these have never been classified or their dates determined. As an example we may mention *A Family Party* (Sir Frederick Cook), a painting which is maturer and more natural in air and arrangement than several mentioned above. In this the perspective of the chamber—always a strength with Hogarth—is most skilfully treated, and the walls and furniture are in his favourite, characteristic key of greyish green and mellow browns. The thoughtful, placid face of the gentleman in the chair is a masterly character study, and the table and tea-things are touched in with the lightest of hands. Considerably later, when the painter

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was in command of all his resources, must be *A Family Group* (National Gallery). Here the soft, dusky atmosphere of the room and the receding shadowy walls and ceiling are beautiful in their restraint. The cool, dainty table linen, the tones of the flesh tints, the natural gesture of the man who is busy at the tea-table, and the charming relation of the lady's dress to the yellow chair beside her, all are perfect. But one defect is striking. Hogarth never attained the art of putting his sitters quite at their ease. The two elder men and the lady have a constrained air; obviously they are waiting, there, and are afraid to move, and the painter, with his intense sincerity, hastens to record the fact, thus robbing his scene of the charm of spontaneity which the Dutch genre painters knew so well how to secure.

## IV

### A HARLOT'S PROGRESS. THE GRAND HISTORICAL STYLE

THE influences—French, Italian, Dutch—that affected Hogarth's artistic development are a subject that is *terra incognita* in criticism.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> “It seems to be uncertain where Hogarth got his peculiar delicacies of colour and handling from, but his execution, when it is most disinterested, bears a remarkable likeness to the execution of his Venetian contemporary Longhi. I am not aware that there is any reason to suppose that either painter was influenced by the other, but Hogarth may have learnt something of the Venetian tradition of Ricci, who was in England in his youth”—says Mr Clutton Brock. “Later, it would seem as if Hogarth had felt the influence of the popular mannerisms of Canaletto and his followers: in pictures like the *Approach to Ranelagh* it is quite discernible,” says Mr Laurence Binyon. Mr Frederick Wedmore asks, “How are we to escape

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conjectures cited below all agree in this, that Hogarth did not remain so unaffected by the example of foreign masters as he would have us believe. Many critics have singled out Jan Steen for comparison with the English master, but in subject not in treatment. It seems probable enough that the immediate inspiration of the "Dramatic Paintings" came from the theatre.<sup>1</sup> Hogarth, from early days, seems to have been on an intimate footing with managers and actors.<sup>2</sup> The stage doubtless attracted him as an admirable school for the study of facial emotion. Before his eyes was

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the recognition of it [French influence] in the *Marriage A-la-Mode?*" and speaks, in this connection, of Watteau, and of Gravelot, the French engraver.

<sup>1</sup> "I have endeavoured to treat my subject as a dramatic writer : my picture is my stage, and men and women my players, who by means of certain actions and gestures are to exhibit a dumb show. . . . This I find was most likely to answer my purpose, provided I could strike the passions."

<sup>2</sup> The scene in *The Beggar's Opera*, Act III. (Nov. 5, 1729), contains portraits of Miss Fenton, the Duke of Bolton, Mr Rich the Manager, Mr Cock the Auctioneer, all of whom became patrons of the painter.



A HARLOT'S PROGRESS, (PLATE II)  
FROM HOGARTH'S ORIGINAL ENGRAVING



## HOGARTH

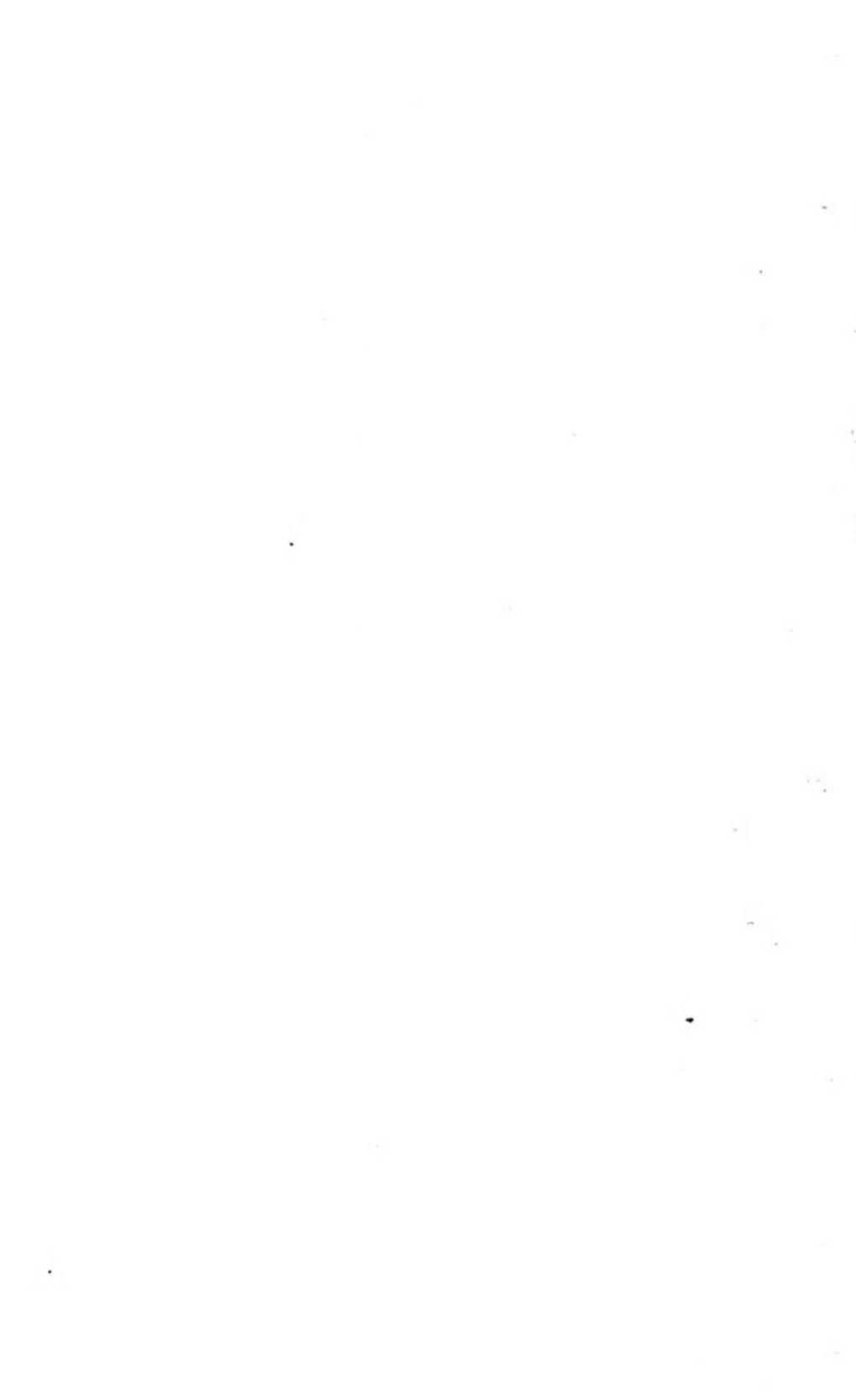
the scene, the story, the dramatic moral! Why not, then, "compose paintings on canvas similar to representations on the stage"? and so "entertain and improve the mind." The success of his picture, the *Scene in the Beggar's Opera*, of which Hogarth painted at least two replicas, may have fired him with the ambition of composing his own "dramatic stories," and his familiarity with the stage would help him to escape didacticism. His "painted morals," indeed, are a compromise between his sound moral sense, hearty in fibre but lacking in fineness, and the most delicate perception of the most complex shades of human passion. His disinterested, aesthetic enjoyment of the human comedy blends with his humour and a grimly moral sense of tragic issues to stamp his vision with a peculiar objective coolness. Often the moral direction of his aim is at war with the irony of his perceptions, as we note in the drawing of the gluttony at *A City Banquet*, which celebrates the Industrious 'Prentice's virtuous ending. This conjunction of moralist, satirist and impartial observer is not uncommon in eighteenth century genius. Defoe, Addison, Swift, Pope, Fielding, Smollett,

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all are rich in didactic veins running through the body of their art. Hogarth's first essay in dramatic painting seems to have been *Before and After*, two designs which satirize the appetite of concupiscence in a humorous and most impartial style. These "two little pictures, unfinished for Mr Thomson, Dec. 1730," are over-vigorous in gesture, but the woman's melting happiness and tender revulsion of feeling in the *After* betray the born physiognomist. The commentators, gratuitously shocked by their "broad" truth, have failed to notice that these designs pave the way for a series of delineations of kindred passions, and may well have suggested the treatment of *A Harlot's Progress*. Materials for a study of vice were at every Londoner's door in days when men and women were pilloried and hanged publicly at the street corners. "Yesterday the noted Mother Needham stood in the pillory in Park Place near St James's-street and was severely handled by the populace." "She was so very ill that she lay along under the pillory, notwithstanding which she was severely pelted, and it is thought she will die in a day or two," says the *Grub Street Journal* of May 6,

A HARLOT'S PROGRESS. (PLATE III.)  
FROM HOGARTH'S ORIGINAL ENGRAVING





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1731, from which sheet Hogarth no doubt took the name of his wanton heroine, "Kate Hackabout, a woman noted in and about the hundreds of Drury, whose brother was lately hanged at Tyburn," Aug. 6, 1730. The curious reader should peruse the "Life of Colonel Charteris" for a very intimate record of Georgian vice. Both Mother Needham, and Charteris the lecher, who had been tried, convicted, and mobbed for a lengthy series of seductions of country girls, figure in Picture I. of *A Harlot's Progress*, an illustration of Hogarth's practice of introducing portraits of a great variety of public characters into his paintings. We are told that it was the painter's practice to make a thumbnail sketch of any face that struck him in the street, and his power of "retaining in his mind's eye" "whatever he wished to imitate," explains how his memory became a vast storehouse of psychological impressions of faces, figures, gestures, attitudes, etc. The direction the great Realist was to take was thus determined. The picturesque material of eighteenth century London life, unabashed and unself-conscious, lay all round him, and his task was to show the beauty

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of the familiar everyday realities, and so to select and combine the details that the character of his scenes should strike deep by their aesthetic power. It is by this passing of the life of Georgian London through the crucible of his imagination that Hogarth attains the rank of the great creative spirits, and may be classified with Molière. It is tempting but useless to discuss whether he would have stood higher as a painter pure and simple had this peculiar creative imagination been lacking, for his genius itself may be defined as the power of constructing and handling a scene or subject charged with meaning, in a purely painter-like way. Sometimes the beauty of his treatment suffers from the emphasis of his humorous insight, e.g. *Southwark Fair*: sometimes it is inspired by his satiric force, e.g. *The Bench*. His genius is composed of distinct layers of mental gifts, and the latter are displayed in changing measure according to his momentary mood and inspiration. The first three scenes in *A Harlot's Progress*, perfectly natural as they are, might almost be scenes on the stage, five minutes after the curtain has gone up. There is a certain heaviness almost



A HARLOT'S PROGRESS. (PLATE IV.)

FROM HOGARTH'S ORIGINAL ENGRAVING.



## HOGARTH

germanic, both in the grouping of the figures and in the naïve direction of the satire, but how masterly (Scene 1) is the demure suggestiveness of this country girl, ripe for seduction, and the side glance of Charteris waiting till the waddling procuress has lodged the prey within his doors. The faces of all three figures reveal Hogarth's astounding power of indicating the most subtle shades of feeling by a broad and simple touch. Compare in Scene 3 the ripe charms of the heroine with the prim starched air of Sir John Gonson, entering in the background, a justice famed for his zeal in hunting down prostitutes, and thieves such as James Dalton, the audacious Street-robber, House-breaker, Foot-pad and Pick-pocket, whose "wigg box" we see on the bed tester. Hogarth, in his psychological impartiality, is as severe on his grave people of consequence as on the vicious and depraved. His wool-gathering parson in Scene 1 is frankly a little ridiculous; so is the good Sir John, whose weakness it was to make "most incomparable, learned, and fine charges to the Grand Jury," while his quarrelling physicians and amorous parson and undertaker in Scenes 4 and 6 are more repellent than the ladies

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of pleasure. Scenes 2 and 5 are the weakest of the series, the gesture of the harlot and the lines of the table legs, in the former, forming an ungraceful pattern, while there is caricature in the figures of the physicians, though their rage contrasts admirably with the immobility of the dying patient, whose last breath is escaping with the ghost of a sigh. Scene 4, Bridewell, with its sinuous line of the prisoners beating hemp, is the artistic gem<sup>1</sup> of the set, preserving the spontaneity of nature, if we except the labour-master, who is pointing the moral with his rattan. The harlot, with her air of exhausted voluptuousness and languid grip of the heavy mallet, and the frail figure of the gambler next her, in bag wig and laced coat, are exquisite in drawing. Hogarth, we may

<sup>1</sup> Five of the six original pictures perished in the Fonthill fire. Two replicas of Pictures II. and IV. (Lord Rosebery) testify to the painter's early command of warm and glowing colour. The scheme of rich browns in Picture IV. is perfect in tone, a little marred by the note of the heroine's pink apron. Hogarth is fond of an audacious piece of colour in the centre of his picture. Compare Scene 3 of *A Marriage A-la-Mode*.

A HARLOT'S PROGRESS. (PLATE V)

FROM HOGARTH'S ORIGINAL ENGRAVING





## HOGARTH

here note, is supreme among English painters in his power of rendering the characteristic manner in which a man feels, touches, or handles an object. In Scene 6 Hogarth, as a satirist of human frailty, vies with Swift. The feeling here, of the bubbling passions and vanities of the flesh, in the baker's dozen of the dead harlot's mourners, mingle with a shocking sense of corruption beneath the coffin lid, suggested by the frills of the coffin lining. The unflinching insight of Hogarth's great and merciless realism here invites comparison with the most brutal of Goya's *Los Caprichos*. The Spaniard is more sensitive and nervous in the sinister beauty of his line; the Englishman shows more psychological breadth and richness. A detail characteristic of Hogarth's impartial vision is the figure of poor Mary Hackabout's little son, who, seated on his stool beneath the coffin, and smothered in his crape weepers and cloak, is winding up his peg-top, his face still swollen with crying. How much the popular taste in aesthetics is governed by our social ideas is proved by our middle class shifting its whole point of view in a century and passing from the didactic panegyries of the Rev. Dr Trusler,

## HOGARTH

in 1768,<sup>1</sup> to the genteel censure of James Northcote, R.A., in 1826.<sup>2</sup> How far a cry is the sentimentalism of Watts' *Love and Life* and Burne Jones's *Love among the Ruins* of our own time from Hogarth's grim chronicle of the life of a woman of the street.

<sup>1</sup> "From this distressful story, let me warn my female readers of the lurking danger that threatens them: as there is no greater Christian virtue than *chastity*, none more pleasing to God or more agreeable to man, it is the interest of every young lady to be particularly attentive to it. . . . Men, however they may detest the loss of virtue in women, are continually laying snares to rob them of it . . . the intolerable wrath of the God of Purity, which the conscience of the hardened sinner, in some measure, anticipates at her dying hour, when the poor distracted soul, pursued by bitter and severe reflection, raves round its clay-tenement, runs to each avenue, and shrieks for help; but shrieks in vain, till, hurried on to the precipice of despair, it headlong falls and sinks into eternity, there to meet the vengeance of an angry God, and receive the punishment allotted for the sinner. Reflect then on this, ye unthinking females," etc.—Trusler, "Hogarth Moralized."

<sup>2</sup> "But if I thought, instead of Hogarth's doll-like figures cut in two, with their insipid, clay-baked



A MAROT'S PROGRESS. (PLATE VI)

FROM HOGARTH'S ORIGINAL ENGRAVING.



## HOGARTH

*A Harlot's Progress* "made" Hogarth. Its success was immediate and lasting. Mr Austin Dobson computes that the painter received some £1260 by the sale of the engravings. Imitations at once appeared, issued by the piratical printsellers, and the prints were so popular that "the subject was made into a pantomime by Theophilus Cibber," and "fair mounts were engraved containing miniature representations of all the six plates." The piracies led to Hogarth and his friends "applying to Parliament for redress," and a statute was enacted in 1735, assigning copyright to the

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faces, I should do something like Sir Joshua's *Iphigene*, with all that delights the sense in richness of colour and luxuriance of form ; or instead of the women spouting the liquor in one another's faces, in the *Rake's Progress*, I could give the purity, and grace, and real elegance (appearing under all the encumbrance of the fashionable dresses of the day) of Lady Sarah Bunbury, or of the Miss Hornecks, sacrificing to the Graces, or of Lady Essex, with her long waist and ruffles, but looking a pattern of the female character in all its relations, and breathing dignity and virtue, then I should think this an object worth living for," etc.— Hazlitt's "Conversations of Northeote."

## HOGARTH

“divers persons” who invented or engraved prints. Hogarth had early been reconciled to his father-in-law, Sir John Thornhill, and his path, for nearly twenty years was to be prosperous and smooth, though, as before stated, his reputation was based on the engravings of his works, and his best pictures generally remained on his hands, to be sold eventually for inadequate sums. Hogarth, now independent of the connoisseurs, was in an excellent position to champion the cause of native talent, and his pictures from this date (1735) overflow with satirical hits at the “Black Masters,” foreign painters, musicians, singers, and the “profound blockheads” who patronized them. His vehemence carried him often beyond the mark, as his attack on Rembrandt, in the burlesque print, *Paul before Felix, designed and etch'd in the ridiculous manner of Rembrant,* proves. But he stood alone for years, a Hereward struggling single-handed against the foreign invasion.

In *An Account of a Five Days' Peregrination*, written by Forrest, there is a faithful description of a holiday taken by Hogarth and four friends, in May 1732, down the Thames



- A The dog was <sup>very</sup> ill  
B Mrs. Thos. Smith  
C Mrs. Smith <sup>was</sup> <sup>very</sup> lame  
D Mrs. H. E. having big <sup>lathons</sup>  
E Mrs. Thos. and Bridget  
F Mrs. Smith <sup>was</sup> <sup>very</sup> lame

BREAKFAST SCENE FROM "THE FIVE DAYS' TOUR"

FROM THE ORIGINAL DRAWING (BRITISH MUSEUM)

he



## HOGARTH

and in the Isle of Sheppey. The practical jokes and rude pranks played in this outing prove how coarse and hearty were the manners of the middle-class Londoner of the period. Too much could easily be made of the schoolboyish humours of the party, as the Englishman from the days of Squire Western to Jacob Faithful rejoiced openly in his frankly animal side. Hogarth was a man of his period, but in his sensitive humanity he showed himself far in advance of his age.<sup>1</sup> A recent writer has failed to see that Hogarth's art stands in as true relation to the mind and robust manners of his time as that of Defoe, Swift, Fielding, and Smollett.<sup>2</sup> His commentary is full-blooded,

<sup>1</sup> Hogarth's description of the plates of *The Four Stages of Cruelty* (1751) runs thus: "The Prints were engraved with the hope of in some degree correcting that barbarous treatment of Animals, the very sight of which renders the streets of our Metropolis so distressing to every feeling mind."

<sup>2</sup> "Life as he sees it is always on the verge of the ridiculous, so that what we see is not truth or even life, still less beauty, which is the joy of life, but a sort of caricature often cruel and without a sense of justice or of pity. It is life seen by one

## HOGARTH

but a multitude of deep or tender strokes testify to the warmth and largeness of his heart. “The coarsely bourgeois society to which he belonged,” if we accept the definition, is there incarnate with “all the form and pressure of the age,” realized by the divination of one who pierces to the essential human secrets of all sorts and conditions of his fellows. As a transmitter of an inexhaustible variety of human emotions, Hogarth among English artists is both the greatest, the subtlest, and the most profound. It is a narrow sense of “beauty,” or of the joy of life, that fails to perceive that Hogarth’s “justice and pity” is broidered not in the forefront of his canvas, but in his whole background of life.

Either just before or just after the publication of the six prints of *A Rake's Progress*, in June 1735, Hogarth made some essays in the

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who has been taught to refuse it without grace, for no cause at all, for no high cause, but because it does not fit with the narrowness of heart of that society so coarsely *bourgeoise* to which he belonged.”—“W. Hogarth,” by Edward Hutton, p. 9.

## HOGARTH

“ grand historical style.”<sup>1</sup> They are naturally a failure but, as Professor Baldwin Brown points out, “ Reynolds’ own efforts in the grand style are theatrical and unreal,” and the blunderers are “ the later men of the period after Reynolds who took themselves seriously as professed votaries of the ‘ grand style.’ ” *The Pool of Bethesda* is a quaint blend of empty “ sublime ” conventionalism and Hogarthian realism. The figures recall the *Hudibras* illustrations, but their homeliness clashes with the futile draperies, set postures, classic colonnade, ridiculous flying angel, and the artificial nude. Mr Wheatley cites Dr Norman Moore and Dr Leonard Mark, who “ praise the correct delineation of disease by the great painter . . . gout, acute melancholia, cancer of the liver, abscess

<sup>1</sup> “ . . . I entertained some hopes of succeeding in what the puffers in books call *the great style of History* painting, so that without having had a stroke of this grand business before, I quitted small portraits and familiar conversations, and with a smile at my own temerity, commenced as a history painter, and on a great stairease at St Bartholomew’s Hospital, painted two Scripture stories—the Pool of Bethesda and The Good Samaritan—with figures seven feet high.”—*Hogarth*.

## HOGARTH

of the heart, phthisis and scrofula," and other diseases are all recognizable. It is interesting that Hogarth should have been tempted along the very path which, in after generations, was to be strewn with the wreckage of nineteenth century Academicians, whose incessant attempt to invent scenes classical, scriptural, romantic, oriental, mediæval, out of properties, hired models, and local colour, are analogous to the doomed efforts of eighteenth century dramatists to manufacture tragedies on Attic models. Had Hogarth simply painted the hospital wards as they met his eye in 1735, we should have had a veracious treatment of a subject never yet handled. It is only right to add that *The Good Samaritan*, though quite uninspired, is, however, simple in its directness. Years afterwards, in *Moses brought to Pharaoh's Daughter* (1752) (the Foundling Hospital), Hogarth came much nearer to success, the face of the little Moses and of Pharaoh's Daughter showing charming tenderness and sincerity, and the head of the Treasurer being a powerful study of old age. The mellow, dusky harmony of the colouring is simple and beautiful—the weakness in the whole being



THE POOL OF BETHESDA  
FROM THE ORIGINAL ENGRAVING





## HOGARTH

the pseudo-classical air of the picturesque pyramids, draperies, etc., on which Hogarth, borrowing from Rubens or Vandyke, no doubt specially prided himself. Poor Haydon's criticism of this picture seems to us to reflect on his own sanity.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Haydon certainly goes too far when he says that the painter merited a strait-waistcoat if he really thought the *Moses* a serious painting." —"William Hogarth," by Austin Dobson.

## V

## THE "DRAMATIC PAINTINGS" (1733-1742)

By his fifty Dramatic Paintings (1733-1759) Hogarth took a position as a creator analogous to that, later, held by Sir Walter Scott in public esteem, and by Thackeray and Dickens in their generation. He is the great story-teller in paint. Like Fielding, Richardson, Sterne, and Smollett, he introduces a world of characters, and unveils the virtues, vices, passions, foibles, pursuits, habits, tastes and ideas of early Georgian society. He is an infallible guide to the streets, houses, apartments, furniture, clothes, etc., of the period. His exactitude is attested by Horace Walpole in a well-known passage;<sup>1</sup> but the æsthetic

<sup>1</sup> The very furniture of his rooms describes the characters of the persons to whom they belong . . . the rake's levee-room, the nobleman's dining-room, the apartments of the husband and wife in *Marriage à la Mode*



'THE DISTRESSED POET'

FROM HOGARTH'S ORIGINAL ENGRAVING



## HOGARTH

beauties of his handling are no less remarkable.<sup>1</sup> Charles Lamb applauds the gentleman who placed Hogarth next to Shakespeare, and, like Shakespeare, he is impossible to criticize except in detail. There is this to be said, however, that in Hogarth's superabundant artistic riches lie the grave defects of his qualities. Most of his pictures violate the

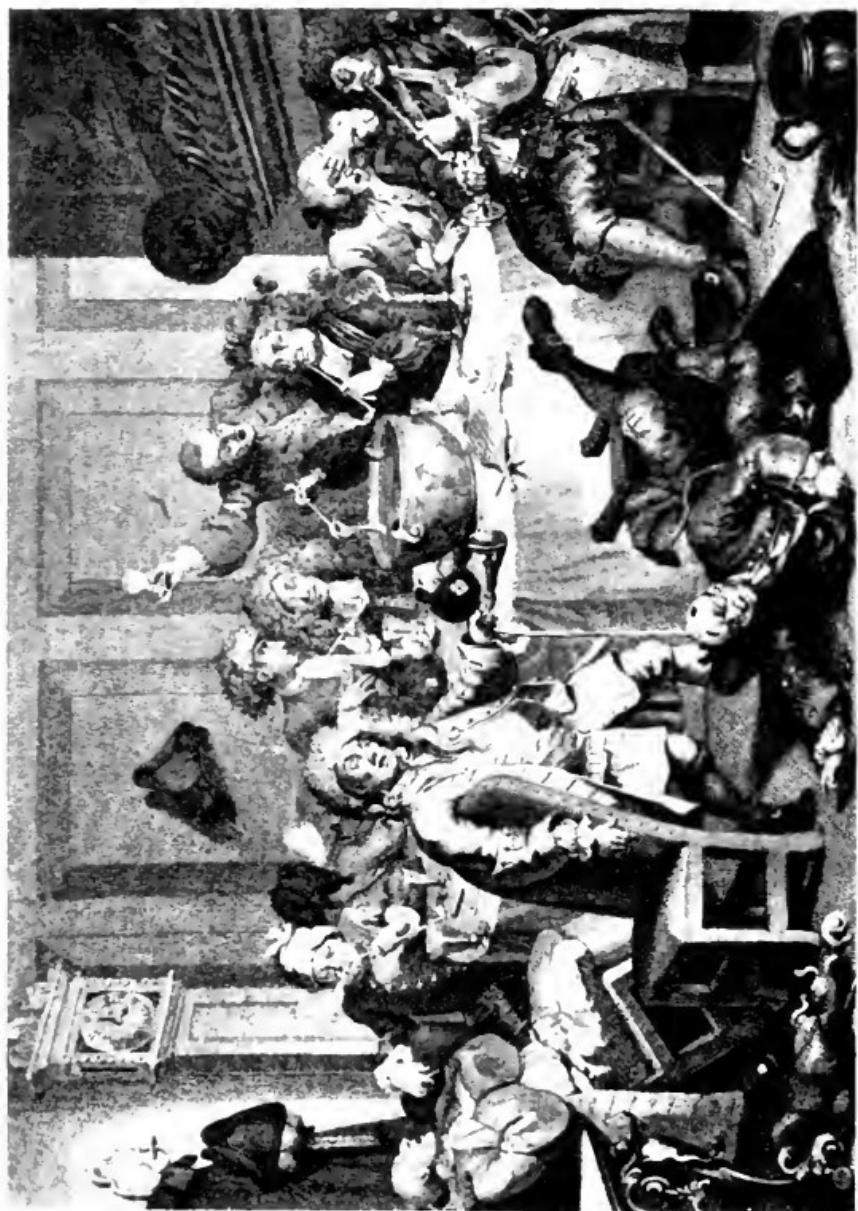
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*a-la-Mode*, the alderman's parlour, the poet's bed-chamber, and many others are the history of the manners of the age."

<sup>1</sup> "Even Reynolds and Gainsborough, colourists often of inexpressible loveliness, tenderness, and charm, were fumblers in their method as compared with Hogarth. Hogarth, in his best works, catches with a perfect subtlety the colour of rich or poor apparel, indoor furniture, and outdoor litter, the satin bows, jewels, ribbons of the bride, the fur coat and hose and waistcoat of the beau, lace, silk, velvet, broadcloth, spangles, and brocade, rich carpets, rich wall hangings, the look of pictures on the wall; or, on the other hand, the coarse appurtenances of the market-place or the street crossing; he catches them and their tone and relations in the indoor or outdoor atmosphere with a perfect subtlety and sense of natural harmony."--"Sidney Colvin," quoted by A. D.

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classic rule, "nothing too much." His exuberant brain teems with his vast knowledge, with his memories and fresh feelings; his eye is insatiable, his hand tireless in its feats of industry. Instead of selecting and eliminating, he loads his canvas with fresh crowds of details. There is, to a fastidious taste, too much of everything, too much wit, fancy, invention, too much skill, too many forms, too much colour. Were one half away, the whole would be the greater. And this, no doubt, is why Hogarth's genre painting is so little discussed by painters: he does not subordinate his parts to gain one arresting effect; he strikes too many blows even while he confounds one by his ability. But he is always a master. Sometimes, as in *Southwark Fair* (1733), he sets out, another Dickens, with the object of recording all the humours of a holiday crowd's amusements, and in sacrificing much to topography and anecdote, his composition breaks up into the most perfect little groups, studies of movement and gesture, beautiful in contrast and balance. Note, for example, the open-mouthed rustics attending the fair drummeress, the light flying



A MIDNIGHT MODERN CONVERSATION

FROM HOGARTH'S ORIGINAL ENGRAVING



## HOGARTH

feeling of the swinging acrobat, the people clinging convulsively to the falling beams and platform.

In the print of *The Laughing Audience* (1733) he captures with intense zest the egoism of laughing faces. The spectators, who are holding their aching sides, wiping their streaming eyes, and grinning with ecstasy at some scene on the stage, show us all the vulgar recesses in character that hilarity can bring to light. *A Midnight Modern Conversation* (1733) is a brilliant study of the stages of intoxication reached by a bacchanalian party. A better instance could scarcely be seen of the triumph of treatment over subject, which last, displeasing as it is in certain aspects, yields here a rich harvest of forms and movements characteristically beautiful and interesting to the vigilant eye of the artist. The grace of the flowing lines of the group of boon companions round the table, the dexterous blending and relief of the seated figures with the masses of the composition suffer a little from the ungainliness of the sprawling toper on the floor. But why not find beauty where it is—there in the gesture of Harrison the tobacconist

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leaning over the profligate parson Ford? and in the owlish gravity of old Chandler the book-binder, the man in the night-cap? Is it the subject that troubles an audience taught to admire the drunken Silenus and bacchanalian nymphs of Greek art?<sup>1</sup> Let us recognize that the innumerable Northern artists who have laboured to transmute “parson Ford” into the classic Bacchus have sacrificed all truth or nature to an empty and formal idealism, and that in Hogarth’s retching or snoring man there is more beauty than in the “noble and thoughtful composition” of the high aims and ideal purity of Leighton’s *Captive Andromache*. Hogarth’s art, rooted in truth to nature, in the closest study of the life at his doors, was now to be prolific in its fruits. In June 1735

<sup>1</sup> “ . . . Such is the effect of prejudice, that though the picture of an antique wrestler is admired as a grand character, we necessarily annex an idea of vulgarity to the portrait of a modern boxer. An old blacksmith in his tattered garb is a coarse and low being: strip him naked, tie his leathern apron round his loins . . . he becomes elevated, and may pass for a philosopher or a Deity.”—Hogarth on “The Election Entertainment.”



THE RAKE'S PROGRESS. DETAIL, SCENE I  
FROM THE ORIGINAL PAINTING (SOANE MUSEUM)



## HOGARTH

*A Rake's Progress*, in eight engravings, was published. The original pictures (the Soane Museum) should be inspected by anyone who still denies that Hogarth was a great colourist. Picture II., *The Levée* of the Rake surrounded by his parasites, is a most subtle harmony of greys, pinks and blues, and III., *The Tavern Scene*, for its daring scheme of bright and glowing reds, is unique in English painting. The painter's amazing subtlety of touch cannot be better studied than in the face of the scolding mother in Picture I., *The Young Heir*, to which the engravings do small justice, the woman's wrath at her daughter's pregnancy being portrayed at the very instant it is melting away at signs of the gold offered her in the outstretched hand of Tom Rakewell. Charles Lamb, in his celebrated essay on "The Genius and Character of Hogarth," has remarked, "The faces of Hogarth have not a mere momentary interest . . . but they are permanent, abiding ideas. Not the sports of nature, but her necessary eternal classes," and there is something mysterious in Hogarth's power of seizing and stamping the most fleeting shades of facial emotion. Picture II., *The Levée*, is of particular

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interest to the critic, because by comparing it with the rejected first sketch, preserved by Samuel Ireland,<sup>1</sup> we learn what a vast amount of planning, cancellings, and modifications must have gone to the conception and execution of the series. The rejected sketch is banal in pictorial arrangement and unreal in its dramatic story. Several motifs mingle in it to the destruction of the artistic unity, and the subject, "The Rake's betrothal to an elderly virgin," is emphasized with irrelevant accessories. All this is swept away in the final design, the chamber itself being preserved, but the figures disappearing, save the kneeling jockey, and the tradesmen, slightly modified, in the ante-room on the right. We may dwell on *The Levée*, since in its skilful grouping of the seven characters whom the painter had studied from the life, Dubois the fencing-master, Figg the quarter-staff champion, Essex, Bridgeman, etc., we may mark how Hogarth compares with Dutch genre masters such as Ter Borch or Vermeer. We have to pay something for "the story," and the price is the absence of those fine

<sup>1</sup> "Graphic Illustrations," Vol. ii., p. 91.

THE RAKE'S PROGRESS, SCENE II

FROM THE ORIGINAL PAINTING (SOANE MUSEUM)





## HOGARTH

shades of inevitable natural relations between the figures that the genre pictures of the great Dutchmen preserve, shades of delicacy in nature that can never be "invented," or supplied even in the most skilful compositions where figures are selected and grouped to make a scene. We have to pay this price in most of the compositions of the great Italians, and we have to pay it in the majority of Hogarth's, as we may note by putting *The Levée*, or even the *Toilet Scene in Marriage A-la-Mode*, by the side, say, of Ter Borch's *The Letter*. Accepting this limitation, we marvel at the psychological secrets revealed in the ring of faces in *The Levée*. It is the history of Georgian society that we read in the obsequious air of the landscape gardener standing behind the Rake, and the Captain, on his left, is the last of the long line of hired bravoes first immortalized in the *Celestina*. The feeling of gold flowing in a steady stream from the purse of the loose-lipped Tom Rakewell into the pockets of his dependants is most subtly indicated by his shifting pose, and carried further by the waiting figures of the tradespeople and the poet and architect in the back-

## HOGARTH

ground, who will, assuredly, soon have their turn. Picture III., *The Tavern Scene*, is masterly in natural grace of composition. Who but Hogarth, among our painters, could so have created this rich and flowing intricacy of outline, the subtle balance of the round table with the oblong mirror, and the walls and ceiling, and the varied beauty of work of each little group? The feeling of heat and noise, of frail flesh and spilt liquor of babbling tongues and besotted debauchery, finds its true accompaniment in the trumpeting scheme of reds. Sir Walter Armstrong has summed up with such justness the pictorial claims of this design<sup>1</sup> that we will pass on to Picture IV., *The Arrest*. Here we

<sup>1</sup> "Here all the subordinate figures—the women on the far side of the table, the street singer, the man with the dish—form a background, a sort of tapestry before which the drama in front is being enacted. They keep their place, they avoid attracting the eye to any one point, they combine individual interest when you look for it with broad distribution in a masterly way, and leave the Rake with his two companions, and the complementary figure on the left, to dominate the scheme as he ought."—"The Art of Hogarth."

THE RAKE'S PROGRESS. SCENE III





## HOGARTH

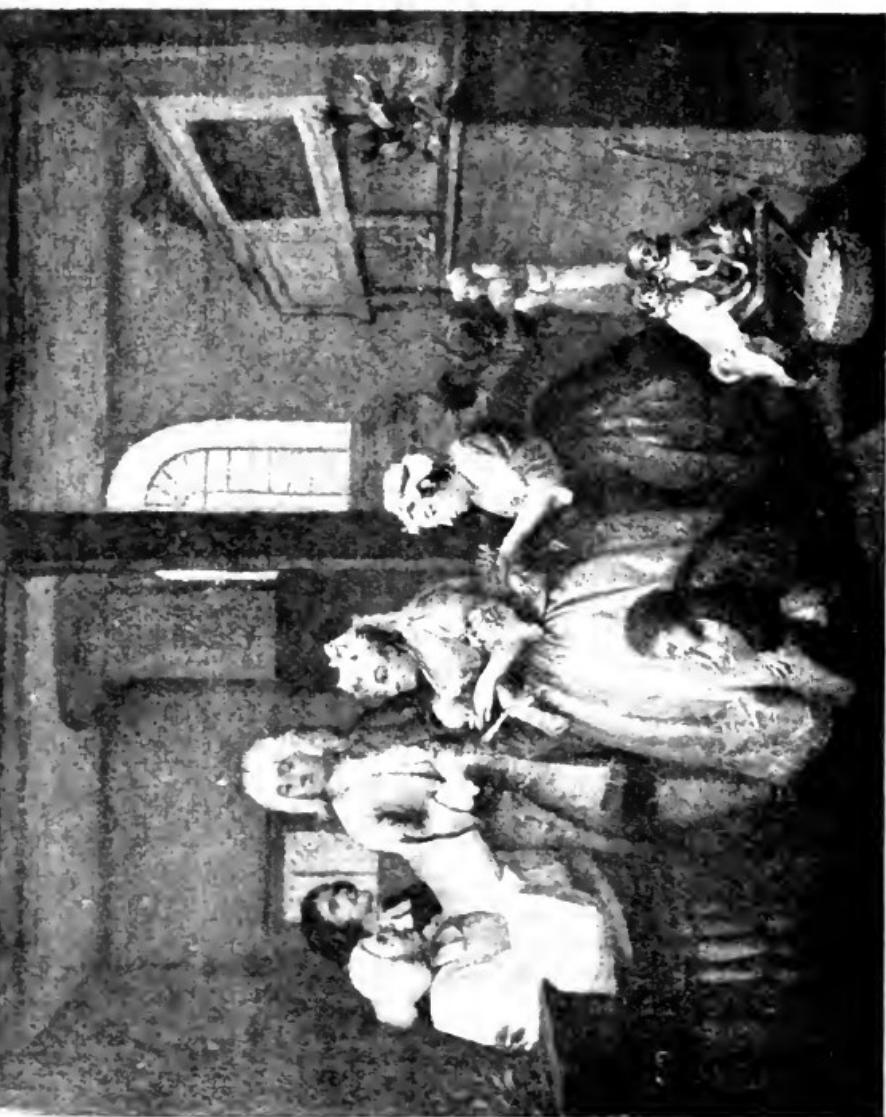
are conscious of the story going to pieces, owing to the artificial idea of introducing the seduced damsel of Plate I.—now become a London seamstress—to intervene in the nick of time between Tom Rakewell and the sheriff's officer. But who cares? so long as the architecture, exquisite in perspective, the bullying bailiff, the stooping figure of the bearer of the sedan-chair, and the Rake himself, in his blue and gold embroideries and lace, are painted with those gleaming soft and mellow touches. The engraving, again is a libel on the picture, and Hogarth, dissatisfied with the result, altered his design in the second state (and very much for the worse) by introducing a group of boys gambling, and a melodramatic ziz-zag of lightning, which threatens White's gambling house. Here we have a good example of the intellectual element in Hogarth suddenly breaking out and unduly asserting itself. The altered design is overcrowded, laboured and artificial. In Picture V., *He Marries*; Picture VI., *The Gambling House*; Picture VII., *The Prison*; Picture VIII., *The Madhouse*, the beauties are less conspicuous than in the engravings,

## HOGARTH

the colouring being flat and toneless, possibly having become dingy with time. Psychologically, in Picture V., *He Marries*, by the grimace of three faces, Hogarth has revealed what a Fielding or a Thackeray would need several chapters to elucidate. The peering inquiry in the sharp eyes of the worldly little parson, as he pauses professionally for the response of the deformed bride, whose simpering face is aglow with a pathetic bliss that Church and State are sanctifying her doting desire, is truly extraordinary in its irony. Hogarth, here, characteristically makes a double-edged stroke at human folly and the failure of social institutions which seek to sanctify it. In Plate VI., *The Gambling House*, the confusion of passions in the central group of gamblers quarrelling, counting money, etc., is admirably set off by the stillness of the seated highwayman deep in thought on one side, and of the crafty old usurer and Lord Cogg on the other. The Rake's violent gesture is too theatrically emphatic, and we may note that Hogarth at times shows an unfortunate predilection for blocking his foreground with an ungainly piece of gesture. In Plate VII.,

THE RAKE'S PROGRESS. SCENE V

FROM THE ORIGINAL PAINTING (SOANE MUSEUM)





## HOGARTH

*The Prison*, and Plate VIII., *The Madhouse*, the painter's literary, moral, and psychological genius places his aesthetic appeal in the shade. Charles Lamb has expounded the first in such final terms<sup>1</sup> that we will only refer to the Rake's beggared old wife, in whose face is the glare of speechless reproach so wrought up with trembling rage at the depths of their ruin as to be terrible in its accusing hatred. It is by the contrast between the haggard glare of the woman's eye and the settled stupefaction of

<sup>1</sup> "Is there anything comparable in Reynolds," Lamb asks, "to the expression which Hogarth has put into the face of his broken-down rake . . . where a letter from the manager is brought to him to say that his play 'will not do?' Here all is easy, natural, undistorted, but, withal, what a mass of woe is here accumulated! the long history of a misspent life is compressed into the countenance . . . here is no attempt at Gorgonian looks which are to freeze the beholder, no grinning at the antique bed-posts, no face-making or consciousness of the presence of spectators in or out of the picture, but grief kept to a man's self, a face retiring from notice with the shame which great anguish sometimes brings with it—a final leave taken of hope, the coming on of vacaney and stupefaction," etc.

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the man that Hogarth, here, may be said to vie with Shakespeare. In pure æsthetic beauty both Pictures VII. and VIII. are perhaps the least satisfying of the series, and the student will note with almost a shock of surprise how the exquisite delicacy and charm of the painting of the lady holding up her fan introduces the feeling of sunlight and fresh air into the gloomy corridor in Bedlam. We may freely grant that the last three scenes in *A Rake's Progress*, despite many exquisite particulars, rank rather as social documents of their day than as supreme pieces of art.

Hogarth's aim—"to compose paintings on canvas similar to representations on the stage . . . my picture is my stage and men and women my players"—sometimes brought to birth pictures of high literary felicity, as *The Distressed Poet* (1736), which, with kindly humour, illustrates the lighter side of the afflictions of Grub Street's victims, from the days of the Dunciad to the days of Chatterton. *The Sleeping Congregation* (1736) (Sir Frederick Cook, Bart.), on the other hand, is a most delicious piece of satiric genre painting, in a

THE RAKE'S PROGRESS. SCENE VI  
FROM THE ORIGINAL PAINTING (SOANE MUSEUM)





## HOGARTH

style that has no English forbears and no heirs. A direct satire on the Georgian Church, it plays on the morals of the age with a caustic lightness that is almost Voltairean. Far beneath the divine, lost in his discourse, which only reaches the painted angel on the chancel wall, slumbers the heavy-witted, animal-minded congregation. The picture, which is most original in its key of sombre browns and blacks, is handled with a quick nervous quality of style that proves how perfectly the painter's eye and his satiric humour could fuse in a creation. That sometimes a rage for humorous anecdote could get the upper hand is evidenced by *The Strolling Actresses* (1738), a design which Charles Lamb rightly declares "in living character and expression is (for Hogarth) lamentably poor and wanting." Here (the engraving alone surviving) the design seems little but a collection of broad humours, forcible enough, but choked and congested with a superfluity of details.

From *The Four Times of the Day* (1738), a series of four designs, we may judge what Antæan labours were undertaken by the

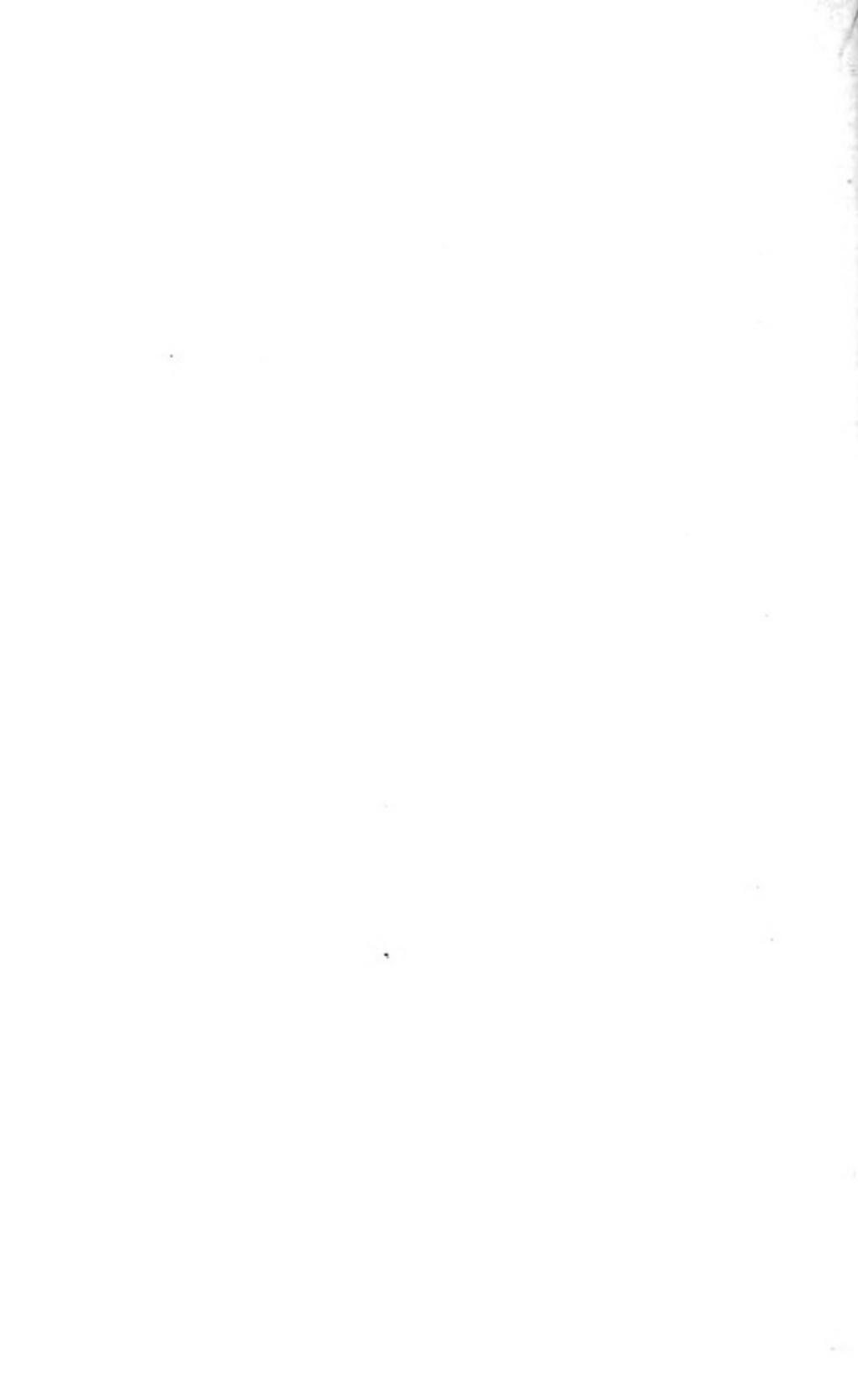
## HOGARTH

prolific genius who, on canvas, set down the Human Comedy of his day with a sharpness of vision that even Balzac in his own art has not equalled. These four designs are most unequal in æsthetic power, the *Evening*, and more especially the *Night*, being very curious documents of Georgian manners. It may be repeated here that until a representative Hogarth Exhibition has been held, it is impossible to settle the relative value of many of the minor Dramatic Paintings. The *Noon* is, however, one of the most perfect compositions that Hogarth ever achieved. In the congregation which is filing from the French chapel in Hog Lane the painter has caught marvellously the people's satisfied and relieved air of duty performed, and the bubbling over of their spirits on emerging from their pent-up pews into the fresh air. Every detail, the self-congratulatory air of the clergyman in the doorway, the study of the hats and backs of the retreating file of people, the parody of fashionable folk in the figure of the toddler of five, the smell of Sunday dinner floating out from the houses to meet the worshippers' nostrils, all this is rendered with an inimitable joyous stroke. Note the Hogarthian



- 100 -

THE FOUR TIMES OF THE DAY, NOON  
FROM HOGARTH'S ORIGINAL ENGRAVING



## HOGARTH

“aside” of the child’s kite, entangled and hanging down from the eaves of the chapel. The more the faces in *Noon* are studied the more the secret of Hogarth’s genius appears inseparable from his faculty of “retaining in his mind’s eye, without coldly copying it on the spot, whatever he intended to imitate.” Any expression of feeling or passion, in its subtlest shade, that has caught his eye is reproduced by him with a sharp fidelity and a breathing force that are truly magical. We have had various artists, such as Wilkie and Mulready, who show considerable talent in reproducing the spirit of a scene by a study of facial gesture, but in psychological fineness, as well as depth and range, they are but children in comparison with Hogarth. When the latter is captured by a mere satiric generalization, as in *The Enraged Musician* (1738), the painter at once descends in the artistic scale, and for this same reason *Taste in High Life* (1742), which is superior to it in grace of line, borders on caricature. We have, perhaps, said enough here to show that Hogarth’s original genius consists of a perfect orchestra of faculties which produce surpassing results so long as each obeys

## HOGARTH

the ruling of the painter-conductor. Occasionally the moral, the satiric, or the intellectual impulse gets a little out of hand. But how admirably they can join in unison to execute a most exacting and complicated symphony is demonstrated by *Marriage A-la-Mode*.

A word may here be said on Hogarth's engravings. Hogarth himself tells us that he had not the patience to acquire a fine technique, and it is ironical that his art should have been so long judged through a medium that was adopted by him purely for reasons of popularity. "Hogarth had a competent, if somewhat heavy, hand, and his prints are interesting, indeed absorbing, as compositions cram full of thought; but he achieved no beauty in the medium, and their quality as engraving is commonplace," says a modern master of the art.

## VI

### THE "DRAMATIC PAINTINGS," 1745-1759

WE have said that Hogarth's besetting sin in his compositions lies in putting in too much, and the censure of a recent French critic<sup>1</sup> goes

<sup>1</sup> "In *Shortly after Marriage*, the gaming-tables, the cards littering the floor, the musical instruments, the burnt-out candles, the account-books in the arms of the steward, the pen behind his ear, and the bills in his hand, tell us about a multitude of things wherein neither correctness of form nor brilliance of colour are of any consequence. All this is very ingenious, very complete, very telling. It is even too much so ; for it is disagreeable, it is provoking to find everything written down for one when one is seeking a sensation. . . . Hogarth leaves nothing for the imagination to do. His pictures do not suggest a drama : they point it out. There is a thousand times more feeling, more drama, more humanity in some enigmatical figures of Watts or Burne-Jones."—"The Early British School," by Robert de la Sizeranne, p. xix.

## HOGARTH

far to counteract the eulogistic chorus of literary appreciations. Pictorially the whole often suffers by the superabundance of detail, and this is the logical result of trying to tell a story in paint—we are driven to admire the speaking details, at the loss of harmony and unity. Nevertheless *Marriage A - la - Mode* (1745) not only retains its hold on the world's imagination as strongly as ever, but in this genre Hogarth's beauties are so surpassing as to leave his successors' over-shadowed. Let us admit the justice of the Frenchman's complaint that there is "the duality of composition" in many of his pictures, with two scenes and several groups, each complete in itself, which are not related *pictorially* to each other,<sup>1</sup> as in *Shortly after Marriage* and *The Death of the Countess*. This defect, characteristic of the English school, springs from an over-

<sup>1</sup> "A dealer . . . cuts the picture in two, thus making it into two perfectly distinct scenes . . . without anyone perceiving anything lacking in either. That has been the history of numerous English pictures, from the *Mousehold Heath* of old Crome to the *Hadrian in England* of Alma Tadema."—"The Early British School," by Robert de la Sizeranne, p. 17.

MARRIAGE A-LA-MODE. SCENE II

FROM THE ORIGINAL PAINTING (NATIONAL GALLERY)





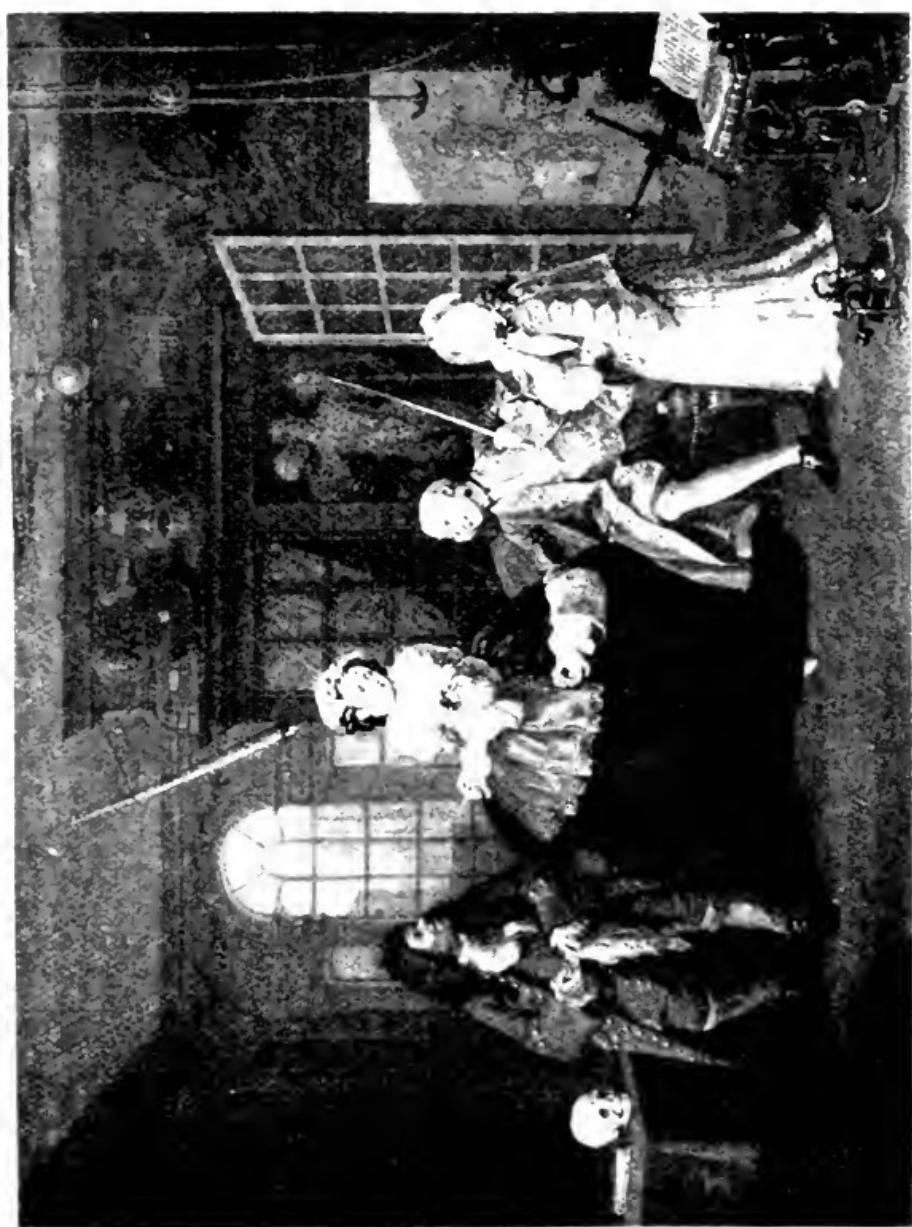
## HOGARTH

scrupulous adherence to nature which is offered us in place of the Latin feeling for design. We find that *character*, resting on the artist's psychological disinterestedness, is seized with such intensity as to make the design, *qua* design, subordinate to its detailed revelations. All is character in the *Marriage A-la-Mode*, whether it be of faces, walls, clothes or ceilings, and the extraordinary thing is that the characteristics of such multitudinous details should ever have been blended by the painter's skill into relatively so pleasing a pattern. There is too much, not too little, "drama, feeling, and humanity" in *The Marriage Contract*, in which Hogarth has laid bare the outrage against morals in this mating of an innocent girl with a weak and vicious fop. The tragedy imminent is disclosed not merely by the gesture of the man who turns from her to admire his own reflection in the pier-glass, but in every line of the drooping figure of the bride. Supreme in its subtlety is the face of this girl in whose tremulous mouth and half-closed eyes the world of soft feminine awakenings is already sealed up by the chill of aversion to her husband. And each figure in

## HOGARTH

the room has also its speaking life story. The complaint is just that each figure, group or portion calls for too individual, separate attention. It is so even with *The Countess's Dressing-room*, which is extremely happy in its skilful and natural grouping. The admirable parts are too often the enemy of the whole. Examine the drawing of the further room in *Shortly after Marriage*, where the yawning manservant is shifting back the chairs from the card tables after the night's dissipation. There is a dream-like atmospheric charm here, the very poetry of a chamber deserted breathes from the scattered cards on the floor and the chandelier with its candles flaring in the morning light, and every detail is beautiful because it is in just relation to the whole, because the solidity of life is rendered with surpassing fineness by the painter who shirks no problem. The painting of the fore room, in which the dissipated earl and his yawning wife sit, inevitably suffers in comparison by reason of the multitudinous pictorial problems to be solved—the steward with his bills, the overturned chair, the dog sniffing, the musical instruments, etc. Techni-

MARRIAGE A-LA-MODE. SCENE III  
FROM THE ORIGINAL PAINTING (NATIONAL GALLERY





## HOGARTH

cally it is an impossibility to introduce all these story-telling details, and yet reject everything that the painter's eye recognizes is not essential to its pure pictorial unity. Hogarth has two schemes, beauty and narrative interest, each clamouring for attention, and however clever his compromise, we realize that the latter will not be allowed to suffer.

Picture III., *The Visit to the Quack Doctor*, aptly illustrates the painter's problem. This beautiful interior, with its subdued atmosphere and restful mellowness, has every air of being painted from an exact study made on the spot of just such a Georgian apartment. Just so the bow-legged empiric must have stood, eyeing some interlocutor ; the tones of his face and dress are in perfect relation to the background. But that the figures of the earl, his girl mistress, and the virago have been painted in afterwards from separate studio studies is evident from their being in a different key. Their faces and dresses, beautifully painted in themselves, are much too bright for the sober tone of the apartment. The gradations of tone are arbitrary, though the eye, fascinated by the

## HOGARTH

revelation of character in the virago's fierce gesture and the earl's mocking air and laugh, may not at first detect the cause. The spectator's compensation for defects of this nature lies elsewhere, in the "clear tonalities, free tints and distinct touches" of the painter's method. The beauty of Hogarth's pure and lively colouring can best be appreciated on a sunlit day, when many of Hogarth's canvases, in their ill-lit gallery, sparkle like jewels. But even on a dull November day the exquisite minor beauties that Hogarth bestows with a lavish hand—such as the delicate sunny vista seen through the archway of *The Gate of Calais*—arrest the most careless eye. In the psychology of gesture expressing the momentary impulse, the birth and change of passions, ideas, and sentiment by the movements of the limbs and body, Hogarth is above all unsurpassable. *The Visit to the Quack Doctor* as a subject is out of date, but its characteristic manifestation of human appetite and passion is, as art, indestructible. The depth and fulness of the lusty flowing main stream of the human tide is felt in the free and natural gestures of the earl and the virago, and, indeed, of all the characters intro-

MARRIAGE A LA MODE, SCENE IV

FROM THE ORIGINAL PAINTING (NATIONAL GALLERY)





## HOGARTH

duced in other canvases of the *Marriage A-la-Mode*. By the end of the eighteenth century this robust whole-heartedness of artistic vision had passed away, and in the Victorian age the broadly human acceptation of life and nature of Hogarth's world was replaced by moral timidity and intellectual evasion. Life was no longer suffered to speak for itself, and the Victorian painters were earnestly engaged in idealizing or sentimentalizing the fundamental facts of human passion. Does anyone believe that the Victorian genre painters—Webster, Mulready, Leslie, Collins, etc.—really represent the human tragedy or comedy of their age in the sense that Hogarth represents it? While Hogarth's vision of life is more universal than Fielding's, the Victorian painters, without real depth or sincerity, are immeasurably inferior to Thackeray and Dickens, and their chief success lay in covering up the hard dough cake of reality with pretty romantic sugar. It is the fashion to speak of Georgian robustness apologetically; but when intellectual sincerity is no longer welcomed, art itself tends to become artificial, and ceases to be a broad impartial mirror of national life and character. In *The Visit to the*

## HOGARTH

*Quack Doctor* vice is not driven underground, but is given its due in the characters of the sad-eyed, deflowered child, the enraged procress and the effeminate nobleman. *The Countess's Dressing-room*, again, is an exquisite piece of comedy that equals anything in Congreve or Sheridan, so natural, lively, and richly diversified is it in satiric force. The fat-jowled, pig-eyed opera-singer, Carestini, a mountain of pampered flesh, his neighbour the cross-legged gentleman with vacant eyes, the Swiss valet, who is curling her ladyship's hair with professional absorption, the *rapprochement* between the Countess, this fresh and flattered girl, and the sleek Counsellor Silvertongue, all these eleven figures, in fact, are painted with such absolute felicity of touch that one can scarcely believe it can be an imaginary composition, one built up from hasty notes, memories, and studies from the life. The creative fecundity is matched by the certainty with which the technical problems are solved, such as the lighting of the scene, which is both natural and happy. For pure beauty of colour the dress of the cross-legged gentleman would be difficult to match in the English school.

MARRIAGE A-LA-MODE, SCENE V

FROM THE ORIGINAL PAINTING (NATIONAL GALLERY)





## HOGARTH

It is in the *range* of his painter's knowledge and feeling, above all, that Hogarth surpasses all his successors. Examine, for example, the face of the dying Countess, of her deformed child, and of the toothless old servant, in *The Death of the Countess*; they are not merely studies from nature, they are divinations of a great creative mind. Hogarth must have watched in life the facial expression of some such emotions; he may have posed the models for this little group, as we know that he posed a friend of his in the character of Viscount Squanderfield. But it is clear that Hogarth also enacted within himself the tragedy he paints, that he could visualize at will the change of face of his characters, just as Shakespeare could create a thousand fleeting shades of mood. Hogarth can stamp an individuality, moreover, with the decisive markings of a generic species: the faces of the angry apothecary and the half-witted servant are examples of this rare gift. Proof of the artist's mysterious insight into the finest recesses of feeling is shown by the spectator's inability to criticize adversely a single face in the whole gallery of *Marriage A-la-Mode*. The idea of

## HOGARTH

the avaricious alderman drawing a ring from off his daughter's finger before it stiffens in death is trite ; but watch the man's deprecatory care expressed in his opening mouth and his soft gesture. Who can say what is exactly in this man's mind ? or what promptings of self inspire a stealthy duty to himself ? The tragedy within the death chamber is subtly accented by the tranquil view of old London Bridge, with its crazy houses seen through the open window, and by the restfulness of the still life of the tobacco pipes and spirit jars standing in the cupboard, which suggest other scenes in the tragico-comedy of life which the old house has witnessed. Hogarth's irresistible temptation to overdo his own effects by superfluous comic strokes here finds vent in the gaunt dog seizing the pig's head, but apart from this *The Death of the Countess* is one of our great classics in ease, breadth, and inevitability.

*The Stage Coach* (1747) is another of those representations of contemporary manners in which Hogarth successfully solved the problem which is puzzling our young school of painters to-day. A critic, Mr Aitken, rightly declares

MARRIAGE A-LA-MODE. SCENE VI





## HOGARTH

that the details are ugly, yet the whole is most beautiful. "He makes a beautiful picture by means of the exquisite play of light and the rich refined colour, softened by the atmosphere." . . . "He even exaggerates the ugliness of figure and detail with a certain savage anger at the hideousness of things." But are they hideous? Is not this "savage anger" merely his temperamental joy in grasping men's idiosyncrasies and laying bare the nucleus and structure of their characters? The portrait of *Simon Lord Lovat* (1747) (National Portrait Gallery), for instance, hypnotizes one by the canny craftiness of the old Jacobite, and every line of the clumsy, bulky figure is instinct with this force. In *The Gate of Calais* (1749) this piercing intensity conjoins with a John Bullish contemptuous distaste for the foreigner. It is instructive to compare this painting with Hogarth's account of his visit to France,<sup>1</sup> where he was arrested

<sup>1</sup> "The first time an Englishman goes from *Dover* to *Calais*, he must be struck with the different face of things at so little a distance. A farcical pomp of war, pompous parade of religion, and much bustle with very little business. To sum up all, poverty,

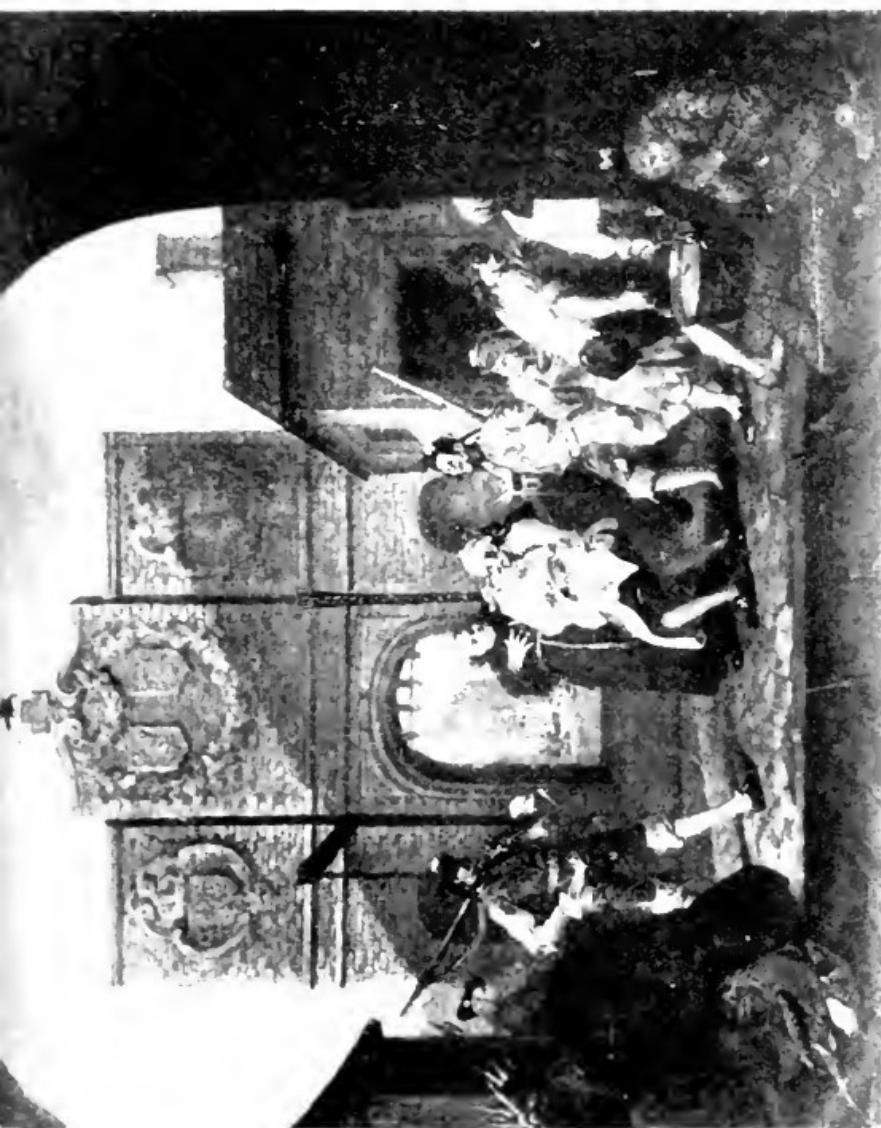
## HOGARTH

as a spy, but sent back to England after his sketches were found “to be merely those of a painter for his private use.” To this incident we owe the beautiful composition, *Calais Gate* (National Gallery), perfect in grouping, movement, atmospheric richness, and in depth and glow of colour. The figure of the tall French sentry on the left, in its supple vigour, beats even those named in the note, and this humorous creation, built up out of a mere *impression de voyage*, is a good instance of Hogarth’s amazing fecundity.<sup>1</sup>

The force of Hogarth’s intellect has been slavery, and innate insolence, covered with an affectation of politeness, give you even here a true picture of the manners of the whole nation: nor are the priests less opposite to those of *Dover* than the two shores.”—“Hogarth Illustrated,” by John Ireland, vol. iii.

<sup>1</sup> “The lean French cook in *Calais Gate*, staggering under the lordly beef, with the gloating, lascivious-fingered friar beside him, and the hungry soldier at his back, make up a trio that not only pulses with vitality, but in pure design, in intrinsic fitness for its place upon the canvas, excels anything you will find in the work of such a man, let us say, as Jan Steen, who was, nevertheless, a master of painted drama.”—Sir Walter Armstrong

'THE GATE OF CALAIS  
FROM THE ORIGINAL PAINTING (NATIONAL GALLERY)







SIMON LORD LOVAT  
FROM THE ORIGINAL DRAWING (BRITISH MUSEUM)



SKETCH FOR "INDUSTRY AND IDLENESS." PLATE IX

FROM THE ORIGINAL DRAWING (BRITISH MUSEUM)





## HOGARTH

under-estimated, through his own blunt avowal of his likings and dislikings, and through the patronizing gossip on his tastes and limitations retailed by Steevens. But Hogarth's acute and daring mind is always consciously at work, criticizing men and manners, even when masked happily in the felicitous flow of line and colour. Turning to the engravings, take the *Idle Apprentice Executed at Tyburn*, Plate XI., where we have not merely an impression of a crowd's flux and attitude, but a psychological study of its behaviour of a deliberate kind. The original sketches for the series, *Industry and Idleness* (1747), in the British Museum, throw interesting light on the struggle between Hogarth the artist *versus* Hogarth the moralist. Take, for example, the first sketch for Plate IX., *The Night Cellar*, which surpasses the finished design. There is no literary meaning here. The grouping is more natural, the menacing proprietress is spontaneous in force, unlike the over-deliberate pose of the whore in the plate. Or take the first sketch for Plate IV., *The Industrious 'Prentice a Favourite*. Here there is delicious spirit in the rough sketch of the Quaker prototype, which in the engraving is

## HOGARTH

lost, giving place to an over-benevolent smugness in the Master's feature and pose. The same is true, more or less, of the other preliminary sketches, which are, later on, modified "to point the moral and adorn the tale." We know, however, that Hogarth set out with the moral intention of "exemplifying Industry and Idleness in the conduct of two Fellow-prentices,"<sup>1</sup> and by a study of the steps he took to that end we can see how the pure artist was compelled to compromise and come to terms with the man of ideas. Undoubtedly to modern taste Hogarth suffers in proportion as his "meaning," humorous or moral, becomes accentuated, but as a genius who makes a representative appeal to the nation his work reflects and is inspired by the whole contemporary spectacle. *The March of the Guards to Finchley* (1751) (Foundling Hospital) combines pure pictorial claims with the historical interest of a great document of social manners. As a realist Hogarth gets into this single canvas as much national feeling, humour, and picturesque incident as all Smollett's novels contain, put

<sup>1</sup> "The Genuine Works of William Hogarth," 1808, vol. ii., pp. 134-6.

SKETCH FOR "INDUSTRY AND IDLENESS,"  
FROM THE ORIGINAL DRAWING (BRITISH MUSEUM)





SKECH FOR "INDUSTRY AND IDOLENESS," PLATE X  
FROM THE ORIGINAL DRAWING (BRITISH MUSEUM)





The IDLE PRENTICE, Executed at Tyburn.



TYBURN,  
WHERE  
THE  
WICKED  
ARE  
HANGED  
BY  
THE  
CROWN  
FOR  
THEIR  
CRIMES.

“INDUSTRY AND IDLENESS,” PLATE XI  
FROM HOGARTH’S ORIGINAL ENGRAVING



## HOGARTH

together. The bare description alone of the figures and their actions, given by Stephens and Hawkins,<sup>1</sup> would fill fifteen of our pages. The picture, a Georgian epic of the period 1745, demonstrates beyond question that the riotous play of Hogarth's humour is always controlled and guided by his marvellous fidelity to social types and manners. Here he is a man of the people, and the satirist of our national habit of "muddling through," The March of the Guards towards Scotland being planned and executed in practically the same spirit, in 1745, as The Guards' Despatch to S. Africa in 1900. The background of this picture, with its vista of marching ranks defiling from the inextricable confusion of the village street, is most beautiful in its arrangement, and in all the groups of the jostling crowds that blend and flow into one another in the haphazard tumult, are innumerable delicacies of gesture, movement, and facial play. Hogarth's management of crowds is always extraordinarily fine, the most notable, perhaps, being that in *The Idle 'Prentice Executed at Tyburn*, Plate XI., where

<sup>1</sup> "Catalogue of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum," vol. iii., Part I.

## HOGARTH

the careless jollity of a popular holiday is blent with a sinister feeling of the spectacle of the hanging being the poor felon's discharge of his last debt to society. Another remarkable psychological study of a crowd is in Plate XII., of *Industry and Idleness*, where the press and swaying rush of the people round the Lord Mayor's coach is felt even in the coachman's handling of the reins. The most interesting plates of this series (1747) are those least adulterated with a moral aim, viz., VI., XI., XII., as the two sketches here reproduced from the British Museum collection show. We need not speak here of *The Four Stages of Cruelty* (1751), prints specially executed with a didactic aim, "engraved with the hope of in some degree correcting the barbarous treatment of Animals." They are part of the social history of the time, but have scant artistic interest. On quite another plane is *Beer Street* (1751), an engraving where the artist's creative imagination triumphs in a pure lyrical outburst. Here the happy humours of the design find expression in exuberant curves of beauty. Note how the sedan-bearers advancing down the sun-lit city street are treading a triumphal stately measure

BEER STREET.



BEER STREET

FROM THE ORIGINAL ENGRAVING

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## HOGARTH

to John Barleycorn, and how from the tankards, uplifted tenderly over the glorious stomachs of the drinkers, flows the foaming benison of peace and plenty. The sinuous line of the lean sign-painter dreamily regarding his handiwork, the buxom charm of the fishwives, and the meaning play of shadow on the Frenchman and the pawnbroker's house, all are as point and counterpoint in this mellow October fugue. *Beer Street* should hang on every Englishman's walls, a corrective to the *fin-de-siècle* aestheticism of his daughters' preference for Burne Jones or Rossetti. The true connoisseur will admire no less the companion print *Gin Lane* (1751), an astounding product of imaginative genius. The drunken harridan with the falling child, in the foreground, is perhaps a trifle over gaunt and bare, but what psychological breadth of vision has inspired this saturnalia of death, disease, and drink in the London streets.<sup>1</sup> The feeling of the crazy houses

<sup>1</sup> "Should the drinking this poison [gin] be continued in its present height during the next twenty years, there will, by that time, be very few of the common people left to drink it."—Fielding's "Enquiry," etc.

## HOGARTH

toppling upon the heads of the brawlers and funeral mourners alike, at one stroke conveys the incorrigibleness of vile human nature, while the shored-up walls of the untenanted rookery suggest that the empty quarter is given over to the plague. It is of interest to note that some of the finest strokes both in *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane* are wanting in the original chalk drawings (Fairfax Murray, Esq.), which proves that many of Hogarth's effects are second thoughts, while his worst are third thoughts, as in the second state of *Beer Street*. In *The Election Series* (Soane Museum) (1756) Hogarth's satiric powers reached their fullest and most mature development. He was now a man of sixty, and while his ridicule of party politics, of the electorate and of electioneering, loses nothing in keenness, his spirit is so wholesome, sane, and hearty as to stamp his scenes with truly national breadth. The pictures, painted in a mellow, easy style of masterly resource, contain scores of fascinating studies of the Georgian populace. The whole effect of these great compositions in calm breadth and richness of detail is of Chaucerian mellow amplitude. English painting has never sur-



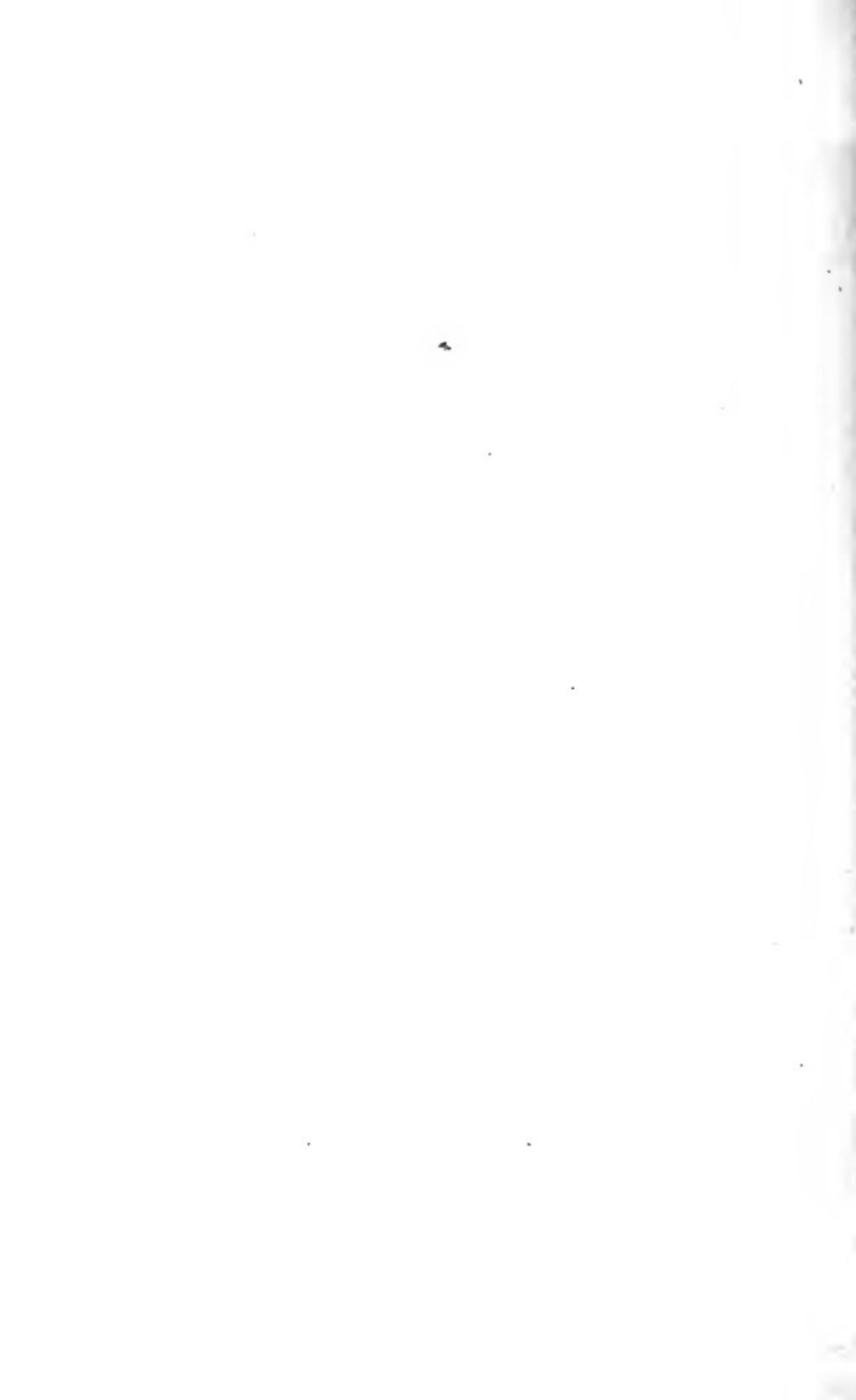
GIN LANE  
FROM THE ORIGINAL ENGRAVING





THE ELECTION SERIES. SCENE IV

FROM THE ORIGINAL PAINTING (SoANE MUSEUM)



## HOGARTH

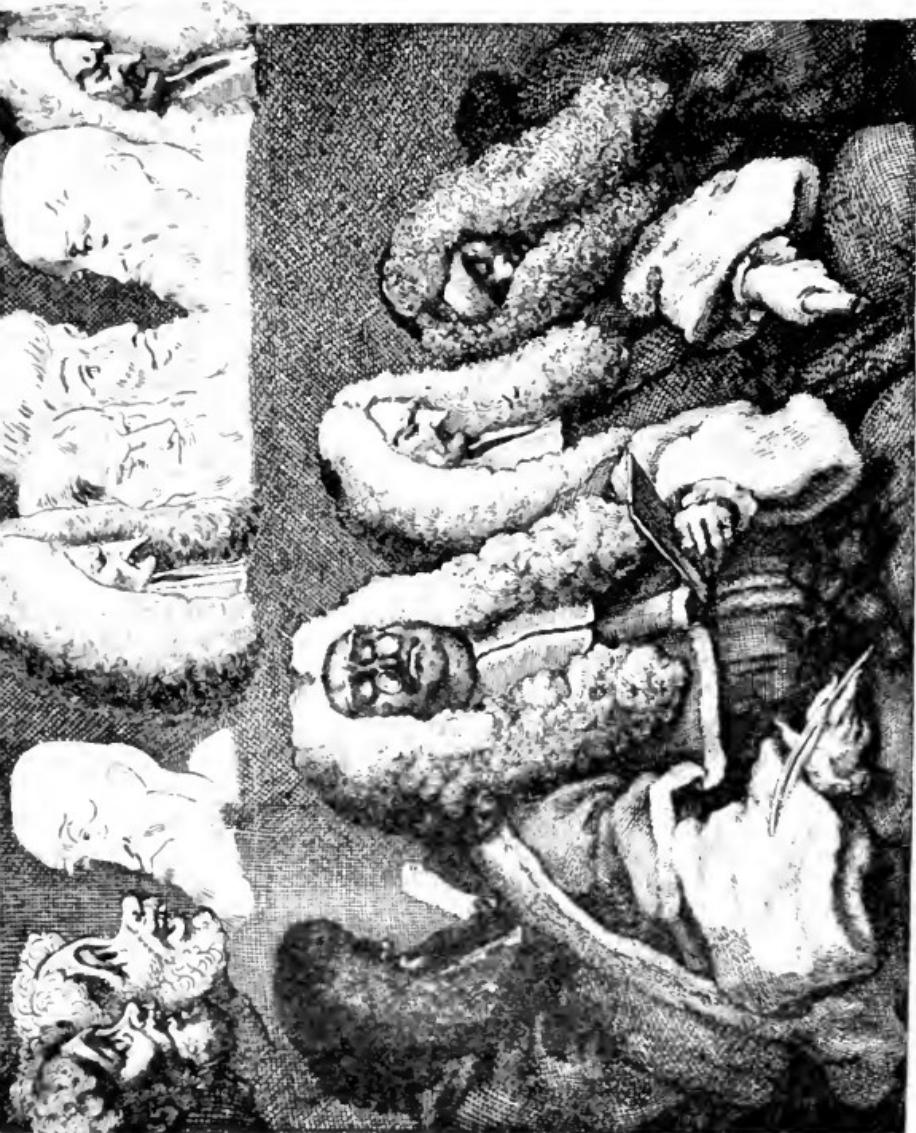
passed Picture IV., for example, with its exquisite little group of spectators on the wall, the ecstatic fiddler, and the three cooks filing solemnly into the house of "the yellows." The sunlit calm of the architecture alone would create any modern painter's reputation. Picture III., *The Polling*, contains matchless gems of satiric portraiture, leaving the twofold impression that Hogarth is both of his age and superior to his age, the true sign of creative greatness. Note in particular, for consummate felicity of expression and gesture, the burly lawyer in the full-bottomed wig, the man who is lifting the dying freeholder, the face of the palsied epileptic, and the clerk who is handing him the pen. Satire so trenchant as this in any other man's hands would degenerate into caricature, but Hogarth *never* caricatures, his teeming mind has absorbed and reproduces all these faces and attitudes direct from nature, and it is only when he forces too many humours upon us that his art suffers, or when, as in the engraving, *The Invasion* (1756), his boisterous and chauvinistic patriotism chances to draw its nutriment largely from the spirit of prejudice, and less from life. *The Bench* (1758), on the

## HOGARTH

other hand, is one of the most impressive of his small canvases. The rubicund Lord Chief-Justice, swollen with self-importance, and the attenuated figure of the sleeping Judge on the left, against the ominous dark background, hint a most sinister meaning. Let us trust that this merciless picture, unique in English art, may come, some day, into the possession of the nation. Another engraving, *The Cock Pit* (1759), is full of astounding brilliance and verve. The nervous excitement of these clustering gamesters' heads, aristocrats cheek by jowl with plebeians, pick-pockets, bookmakers, jockeys, tipsters, and the rabble, is felt in the staccato breaks in the pattern, which last is subtly blended with the swelling contours and curves of the pit. The pure artist here asserts himself, without a trace of any feeling but disinterested joy in the spectacle of the gamblers' lust for sport. The *Lady's Last Stake* (1759) may close our rapid survey of the *Dramatic Paintings and Engravings*. Here all the painter's psychological skill is shown in the struggle in the tempted woman's face, between the call of duty, inclination, and temper. While the walls and mantelpiece, the clock and table, and the light night sky are

THE BENCH. Third State

From Hogarth's ORIGINAL ENGRAVING





THE COCKPIT  
FROM HOGARTH'S ORIGINAL ENGRAVING





## HOGARTH

handled with flowing ease, the values of the picture are lacking in delicacy and the colouring is harsh. It was the success of this painting which, unfortunately, brought Hogarth his commission to paint the *Sigismunda*, a subject to which we shall recur in our last chapter.

## VII

### SOME PORTRAITS AND SKETCHES

HOGARTH's portraiture has remained in the shade ever since the sun of Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Hoppner dazzled English society. The revolution in style introduced by Reynolds, about 1755, substituted glowing Venetian colouring, blended and diffused in harmonious masses, for the quiet and dryer style of a defined contrast of colours. The charm, grace, and distinction in the air and pose of the sitter, the soft or mellow atmosphere bathing the canvas with a brilliant or luscious colour scheme, which were soon to become fashionable, were undreamed of by Hogarth, who "followed the convention of his day," Sir William Armstrong tells us, "in placing his sitter against a dark background." And yet, according to the same authority, Hogarth, in his *Portrait of His Sister*, evolved a



GEORGE ARNOLD, ESQ.

FROM THE ORIGINAL PAINTING (FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM)

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## HOGARTH

system which was "followed a century later by Eugène Delacroix, who was under the impression that he was its inventor."<sup>1</sup> What is the date of this portrait? The sister must be Ann, who was born in 1701, and she cannot be more than thirty-six to judge by her look, and this would give us the date approximately of 1737, when Hogarth was a man of forty. When we examine the magnificent technique of this painting, and of the *Quin the Actor* that hangs near it, it is, at first, hard to say what is the factor that diminishes their power over us. The flesh painting of Quin's full-blooded cheeks, as well of the healthy, clear-skinned, buxom complexion of *Hogarth's Sister*, beats the flesh-painting of Sir Joshua right out of the field; but there is a certain hidden discord and

<sup>1</sup> ". . . for beauty of execution, for the skill with which light and colour are substituted for paint, *Hogarth's Sister* beats them all. . . . The high lights and the deep shadows are in each case two primaries, which unite to form the half-tone. The dress which produces the effect of yellow is yellow in the high lights, red in the deepest shadows, and orange in the transitions; so with the scarf, the three tints of which are orange, green and blue."—*"The Art of Hogarth"* p. 14.

## HOGARTH

even a lack of joyousness in *Hogarth's Sister, Miss Fenton*, and in the painter's *Portrait by Himself*. It must be that the wrong relation in tone between the dark background and these admirable heads is the treacherous factor, secretly handicapping the painter's felicitous touch. It must be this and not the darkness of the background in itself, as Sir William Armstrong seems to imply, that is the discord.<sup>1</sup> That this damaging arrangement was a studio convention for highly finished portraits alone seems certain from the fact that Hogarth disregards it altogether in his "oil sketches." Let us turn to the celebrated *Captain Coram*. This portrait, which Hogarth tells us is that "which I painted with most pleasure and in which I particularly wished to excel," lacks only one quality—unity—to be a masterpiece. The breadth and force of the handling are superb, and the beaming humanity

<sup>1</sup> "If the fashion of the day had not led him to put his sitter against a dark background, the picture might have been more beautiful still. Imagine such powers employed in making the figure appear round and moving in an *enveloppe* of light."—Essay on "The Art of Hogarth," p. 14.



A DEAD BABY



## HOGARTH

of the warm-hearted founder of The Foundling Hospital is seized with such buoyancy as to leave the rival portraits hanging near—an early Reynolds, a Ramsay, a Shackleton, a Hudson, etc.—dry and lifeless ghosts. The details (note the painting of the glove) are brilliantly rendered, but the aesthetic appeal of the whole is damaged seriously by the disharmony in tone between the figure and the accessories, the conventional pilaster, curtain, the globe, seal, books, and Royal Charter, which material symbols Hogarth, as a man of ideas, was no doubt delighted to introduce into his picture. No doubt Hogarth was so intent on personality and character that he considered as secondary the arrangement of colours and lines in a beautiful pattern. Often the pure painter prevails, as in the *Peg Woffington* (The Marquis of Lansdowne), and yet here again the beautiful handling of the mouth and eyes, the exquisite contrast in tone of the curls and lace, and the soft and delicate colouring, are wronged by the conventional lighting. Sometimes the psychologist is foremost, as in the *Sir Caesar Hawkins* (Royal College of Surgeons), where the surgeon's alert glance and concealed

## HOGARTH

hands reveal the operator who is eyeing the patient and summing up his case. In others, such as the *Lord Boyne* (H. M. Colnaghi, Esq.), and the *Portrait of a Gentleman*, and the *Portrait of a Lady* (C. Fairfax Murray, Esq.), a stolidity and emptiness of expression seem to struggle with a masterly reading of character, as though both the artist and the sitter were refrigerated by their Georgian atmosphere. In the *Mrs Desaguliers* (1745) the matter-of-factness and tastelessness of the pose, which at first impress one, yield, at a further scrutiny, and the face of this sensible country girl begins to glow with life. Hogarth, as a realist, reverses the procedure of Reynolds and Gainsborough : he eagerly sacrifices charm to character, and even seems to welcome an awkward or ugly fact as a precious part of the psychological scheme. In the portrait of *The Painter's Wife* (L. H. M'Cormick, Esq.), the cap that Jane Hogarth wears, and the arrangement of the easel near at hand, are most uncompromising. "I will paint just what I see before me," the painter seems to say ; "this cap interests me no less than the flesh of this bosom, neck and shoulders, and the blue dress. My wife has



ORATOR HENLEY CHRISTENING A CHILD  
FROM THE ORIGINAL DRAWING (BRITISH MUSEUM)



## HOGARTH

an air of posing for me, well, I will paint that too."

Despite this literalness, and, indeed, because of it, Hogarth's face-painting in many respects is superior to that of his great successors. He is truly objective, a quality which we prize when we compare the canvases of Reynolds, in all their ripe charm and grace, betraying, each, a *souçon* of that sentimental sweetness which always delights our English public. Again, Hogarth, because he is downright and homely in his realism, because he paints everything that he sees in a face, goes deeper to the roots of character and of a family stock than Reynolds or Gainsborough. Possessed of nothing of the latter's exquisite distinction, tenderness, and grace of style, he does not invest his sitters with that air of high birth and aristocratic breeding, with those beautiful and sensitive features which we find in almost all but Gainsborough's early portraits. Where Reynolds and Gainsborough paint a class Hogarth paints a man or woman, without the faintest trace of flattery.<sup>1</sup> The *George Arnold*,

<sup>1</sup> Walpole's testimony concerning Hogarth's difficulties with his patrons is that "a satirist was

## HOGARTH

*Esq.* (Fitzwilliam Museum), is certainly one of the portraits "said to be nature itself." The honest heartiness of this sanguine, masterful man speaks in his resolute eyes and mouth. In the *Miss Arnold*, here is the same family type, the same characteristics, in milder feminine form, the man's flesh and blood transmuted in his daughter's personality. And neither Reynolds nor Gainsborough could have recorded with the same strong solidity the actual body of the woman, the way the neck rises out of the healthy bosom, the arms out of the shoulders, the hair unadorned, and the large, capable hands. They were in search of

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too formidable a confessor for the devotees of self-love." Hogarth's own account is to the same effect. "I found by mortifying experience that whoever would succeed in this branch must . . . make divinities of all who sit to him." In another passage he tells us, ". . . my Portraitures met with a fate somewhat similar to those of Rembrandt. By some they were said to be *nature itself*—by others, declared *most execrable*; so that Time can only decide whether I was the best or the worst Face-painter of my day; for a medium was never so much as suggested."



MISS ARNOLD

FROM THE ORIGINAL PAINTING (FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM)



## HOGARTH

beauty, distinction, refinement, and the presentation of a healthy young woman, just as she is, is a subject alien to their art. Even if we leave Hogarth's great successors out of the argument, it may be urged that Hogarth's honesty is exceedingly refreshing, when compared with the art of the nineteenth century English portrait painters. Examine the unpretentious *Hogarth painting the Comic Muse* (1762) (National Portrait Gallery), and this prosaic sketch of the sturdy little figure with shaven head and worsted stockings may seem dull and lustreless, but the vast majority of the portraits of hundreds of Victorian celebrities in the galleries beneath will soon convince you that theatricality and false emphasis, and a smooth and shiny idealism, are as common, with us, as reticence and modesty in the art are rare. And this sincere realism can blossom forth, when Hogarth is at his finest, with all the freshness and magic of Nature. Examine *The Shrimp Girl* (National Gallery). The bloom of this saucy face, the ingenuous freshness of the girl's glance are rendered with a flying lightness, an unerring delicacy of touch that are magical, that are matched by nothing in the

## HOGARTH

English School. A learned critic, indeed, goes further.<sup>1</sup> But what is to be remarked is that the subtlety of this harmony of reddish-browns and greens is as just as the spontaneity of the handling. It must be recognized that this oil sketch is superior in its fresh charm to the highly-finished portrait of *Hogarth's Sister* (National Gallery), and the reason is simply that Hogarth followed his pure instinct in this sketch and not the studio recipe of "a conventional background." The marvellous *Six Servants* (National Gallery) seems to justify him in his boast that he "could paint a portrait as well as Vandyke." The dewy freshness and ingenuousness of the little boy's spirit shining in his clear eyes and candid mouth and forehead are perhaps the most beautiful thing in the whole of the British galleries. What could the creator of this masterpiece of *The Shrimp Girl*, hanging beside it, not have achieved if he willed? Of equal beauty and force is the *Portrait of a Lady* (Sir Frederick

<sup>1</sup> "The *Shrimp Girl*, for instance, is a masterpiece to which the nineteenth century can hardly produce a rival."—"The History of Painting," by Richard Muther, vol. i.

HOGARTH'S SIX SERVANTS

FROM THE ORIGINAL PAINTING (NATIONAL GALLERY)





## HOGARTH

Cook), in which the mouth and eyes are painted with the most sensitive, consummate touch. The firm, haunting glance and bloodless face of this elderly woman are in true relation to the background, and, with its simple colour scheme of browns and whites, dominate any other portrait hung near. The history of this portrait would seem to be obscure.<sup>1</sup> In touch the painting is as direct, simple and unfaltering as *The Six Servants*, but it suggests a debt to Dutch influence. We know too little of Hogarth's essays in this or that direction to pronounce, but the handling of the white head-dress and the discoloured tone of the same support the attribution to Hogarth. Another

<sup>1</sup> Mr H. O. Wheatley has recently pointed out ("Hogarth's London," p. 396) "that this portrait of a comely middle-aged woman," catalogued in recent exhibitions as "Sarah Malcolm," "cannot be a portrait of the murderer," who was only twenty-three when executed. By the kindness of the owner, I have examined the various inscriptions on the back of the portrait, and I can only suggest that the successive owners of the picture have been misled by some enterprising individual who has been at pains to make out for it a false genealogical table.

## HOGARTH

picture without a pedigree is *The Green Room, Drury Lane*<sup>1</sup> (Sir Edward Tennant), an astonishingly brilliant piece of work, but surely belonging to a school later than Hogarth's? One wishes to credit Hogarth with this wonderful harmony of rich colours, this luminous background, this audacious modelling of the actor who is standing up; but is not the lighting, the colouring, the *bravura* of the whole quite unlike Hogarth? We confess that we cannot reconcile the vision or manner of this brilliant masterpiece with the work of the painter who, *at a later date*, is known to have executed the *Lady's Last Stake*, totally opposed to it in style, school, and tradition. Who, then, could have painted it? And on this subject we may add, that the owners of any unpleasingly hard, crude, or wooden Georgian portrait find it convenient, nowadays, to label it a Hogarth. Who can contest the attribution? since

<sup>1</sup> Mr Wheatley points out, in his "Hogarth's London," that of the seven people, six—Mrs and Miss Pritchard, Barry, Fielding, Quin—could not possibly have come together at Drury Lane. We suspect that the dealers had once a clue to the authorship of the work.



PORTRAIT OF A LADY

FROM THE ORIGINAL PAINTING SIR FREDERICK COOK



## HOGARTH

Hogarth, who is so varied in his styles, so unequal in his quality, remains an unknown territory in criticism. The portrait, styled *Ann Hogarth* (Miss Reid), a hard, pale spinster, with lace cap and skinny arm and hand holding a stiff flower, and pervaded with an old-maidish frigidity that is positively cruel, may or may not be genuine. Till a Hogarth Exhibition has been held, and many portraits hung side by side, it would be premature to speak. The spirited sketch of *Queen Charlotte* (Corporation of York), in a vein of comedy of a most delicious order, shows that Hogarth came to his work in most varying moods. In our judgment the most interesting Hogarth exhibited of late years is *The Staymaker* (Edmund Davis, Esq.), an unfinished oil sketch, which in its subtle scheme of greens, blues and pale browns shows almost a Whistlerian delicacy of "values." The pure artist triumphs here. Yet, as Mr Clutton Brock points out, the picture is "full of undeveloped humours. If he had finished it Hogarth would probably have developed these humours rather than the pictorial beauties of the work, and perhaps he left it unfinished because he did not think the humours worth developing." Or perhaps the

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artist recognized that its freshness and charm would have been dulled by another touch. The professional care of the male stay-maker in fitting the woman, who is screwing her head round to see her own back in the glass held up by the anxious abigail, the feel of the baby's plump flesh against the puffy face of the father, the strut of the small boy who is playing at being a grown-up, with what vivacity these things are dashed in! Another exquisite thing, supremely delicate in touch, is the oil sketch of *Orator Henley Christening a Child* (British Museum). Delicious is the broad-featured old nurse in her professional wisdom, the young mother exhausted and nervous after child-bed, and the parson in whose face the world and the flesh are paramount. The chalk drawing of *A Dead Baby* (British Museum), again, shows Hogarth's wonderful sensitiveness, the details having no separate existence, but flowing out of the whole as water brims over a dish.

By the kindness of M. Simon Bussy, the distinguished French painter, we are enabled here to call attention to the subject of an unknown, reputed Hogarth in the Museum at

'THE STAYMAKER

FROM THE ORIGINAL PAINTING (BY PERMISSION OF EDMUND DAVIS, ESQ.)







A REPUTED HOGARTH  
FROM THE ORIGINAL PAINTING (BESANÇON MUSEUM)



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Besançon. The subject is obviously a visit paid to a watchmaker's shop by a party of distinguished foreigners. The atmosphere and the faces both seem foreign (French?) in the photograph from which our illustration is made. It is to be hoped that some competent critic may soon examine the painting and report on its qualities.

## VIII

### THE LAST YEARS

IN a letter of May 5, 1761, Horace Walpole records a conversation that had passed “t’other morning” between Hogarth and himself, relative to “a critical work . . . or apology for painters” which the painter was then preparing. “I don’t know if I shall ever publish it,” Hogarth added. This MS., which includes autobiographical fragments, notes, and letters on the *Sigismunda* controversy, a supplement to the *Analysis of Beauty*, etc., which was published by John Ireland in “A Supplement to Hogarth Illustrated” (1798), contains by far the most interesting data that exist on Hogarth’s life and character. They give an invaluable though sketchy account of Hogarth’s activities till his marriage in 1729, and a very good idea of his position, opinions, and controversies with his enemies from 1754-1764. How little is

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known of the middle, most creative period, 1729-1750, may be learnt from the scanty pages devoted to it by Nicholls and Steevens in "The Genuine Works." Mr Austin Dobson has since collected every contemporary reference that scholarship and ardour can disinter, but the main facts can be put in a few lines. We know that Hogarth's reputation and prosperity steadily increased; that his marriage was a happy one, though childless; that he was a kind master, with whom his servants stayed; that he was esteemed by Fielding, Garrick, and Richardson; that he was acquainted with Dr Johnson, Wilkes and Churchill. We know that he took a warm interest in and was active in the founding and management of the Foundling Hospital, 1739, till his death. We know that nineteen of his most famous pictures fetched about £23 apiece in 1745; that the six pictures of *Marriage à-la-Mode* realized £100, 15s., exclusive of the frames, whereas for the stagey portrait of *Mr Garrick as Richard III.*, and the mediocre *Paul before Felix*, together, he received £400. We know that in 1748 he paid a brief visit to France. There is ample evidence to show that he was

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brusque, opinionated, hospitable, kind-hearted, and generous; that "his conversation was lively and cheerful," and that "he had an eye peculiarly bright and piercing and an air of spirit and vivacity." There are, of course, other particulars of interest for which we will refer the reader to Mr Austin Dobson's pages, adding that every other sentence written by Steevens is tinged with such sneering malignancy that it is impossible not to distrust every comment he makes. We pass, then, to the subject of Hogarth's last years.

Nothing excites the malice of small minds more than the independence of the genius who goes his own way and relies on himself. Should he slip or appear to stumble, in a flash the tribe of criticasters, "fall on him, eager to avenge their own mediocrity." In an ill hour Hogarth turned author, and this gave the opportunity to "that worthless crew professing vertu and connoisseurship." "In 1745, Hogarth," says John Ireland, "introduced a painter's palette [into his own portrait] on which was a waving line inscribed *The Line of Beauty*. This crooked line drew upon him a numerous band of opponents, and involved

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him in so many disputes, that he at length determined to write a book, explain his system, and silence his adversaries." "The Analysis of Beauty," published in 1753, is both a daring and laborious attempt to supply scientific explanations of the pleasing or displeasing effect lines, movements, attitudes, gestures, and proportions in art and nature make upon the beholder. Hogarth's chapters on "the fundamental principles of Beauty, as he understood them, viz. Fitness, Variety, Uniformity, Simplicity, Intricacy, and Quantity," are full of acute observations, and far richer in practical illustrations than the majority of modern works on *Aesthetics*. Barring a little conceit in the Introduction, there is nothing to criticize, though no such Analysis can, naturally, be carried much beyond abstract laws and generalities. Hogarth, however, seems to have reaped little but mortification from its publication.<sup>1</sup> "Numerous prints were

<sup>1</sup> For this I have been assailed by every profligate scribbler in town. . . . By those of my own profession I am treated with still more severity. Pestered with caricature drawings, and hung up in effigy in prints; accused of vanity, ignorance, and envy; called a

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published in ridicule of his system and himself," says Ireland, and the inscription of one puts Hogarth's offence, his life-offence, in a nutshell. He is depicted with ass's ears, stripped, and lashed at the cart's tail for "*flying in the face of all regular bred gentlemen, painters, sculptors, architects—in fine, arts and sciences.*"<sup>1</sup> In a sense this is true. Hogarth, in his essential genius, always was and remained a man of the people, and his work, in less than fifty years, was to be indicted on this very ground, by Mr Barry, the Professor of Painting to the Royal Academy, viz., "examples of the naked and of elevated nature but rarely occur in his subjects, which are for the most part filled with characters

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mean and contemptible dauber . . . represented under the hieroglyphical semblance of a satyr, and under the still more ingenious one of an ass.

<sup>1</sup> Hogarth thy fate is fix'd ; the Critic Crew,  
The Connoisseurs and dabblers in *vertû*,  
Club their united Wit, in every Look,  
Hint, Shrug, and Whisper, they condemn thy  
Book,  
Their guiltless Minds will ne'er forgive the Deed ;  
What Devil prompted thee to write and read ?

—*Gray's Inn Journal*, 15th Dec. 1753.

[Mr Austin Dobson's Quotation.]

THE ELECTION SERIES. SCENE I





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that in their nature tend to deformity." Barry in turn was ridiculed by Charles Lamb, following Ireland, but it is strange that the Professor did not point his academical moral by adding that "High Art" paid better than "Low," Hogarth receiving 500 guineas for an indifferent altar-piece at St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, and 50 guineas each for the immortal four pictures of *The Election Series*! In June 1757 Hogarth was appointed Serjeant-painter to the King, an appointment worth £200. In 1759, at the earnest request of Lord Grosvenor, who, later on, backed out of his bargain, Hogarth undertook the subject of *Sigismunda Mourning over the Heart of Guiscardo*, in emulation, says Horace Walpole, "of one of the finest pictures in England, the celebrated *Sigismunda* of Sir Luke Schaub . . . said to be painted by Correggio, probably by Furino. . . . After many essays Hogarth at last produced *his Sigismunda*—but no more like Sigismunda than I to Hercules. Not to mention the wretchedness of the colouring, it was the representation of a maudlin strumpet just turned out of keeping, and with eyes red with rage and usquebaugh, tearing off the ornaments her

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keeper had given her. . . . None of the sober grief, no dignity of settled anguish, no involuntary tear, no settled meditation on the fate she meant to meet, no amorous warmth turned holy by despair; . . . Hogarth's performance was more ridiculous than anything he had ever ridiculed." This ill-natured criticism (written many years later) reflects the spiteful attacks of malice triumphant which again assailed Hogarth. That he suffered acutely is shown by his own words<sup>1</sup>; but worse was to follow. In September 1761 Hogarth issued a satiric print (of no artistic value) in support of Lord Bute's foreign policy, directed

<sup>1</sup> "As the most violent and virulent abuse thrown on *Sigismunda* was from a set of miscreants with whom I am proud of having been ever at war, I mean the expounders of the mysteries of old pictures, I have been sometimes told they were beneath my notice. . . . However mean the vendor of poisons, the mineral is destructive: to me its operation was troublesome enough. Ill-nature spreads so fast, that now was the time for every little dog in the profession to bark and revive the old spleen which appeared at the time of the 'Analysis.' The anxiety . . . brought on an illness which continued twelve months."—Hogarth.

SIGISMUND  
FROM THE ORIGINAL PAINTING NATIONAL GALLERY





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against Pitt and Lord Temple, disregarding two messages sent him by Wilkes and Churchill, the henchmen of the Opposition, that should this print, *The Times*, appear, they would "revenge their friends' cause." Wilkes, the popular hero of the hour and editor of the *North Britain*, immediately retaliated by a most bitterly vindictive attack on Hogarth.<sup>1</sup> A peculiarly venomous reference to Mrs Hogarth is reported to have cut Hogarth to the heart. "He was so thoroughly wounded . . . especially with regard to what related to domestic happiness, that he lay nowhere

<sup>1</sup> "The humorous Mr Hogarth, the *supposed* author of the 'Analysis of Beauty.' . . . We all titter the instant he takes up a pen, but we tremble when we see the pencil in his hand. . . . I need only make my appeal to any one of his *historical* or *portrait* pieces, which are now considered as almost beneath all criticism. He never caught a single idea of beauty, grace or elegance. . . . The rancour and malevolence of his mind made him very soon turn with envy and disgust from objects of so pleasing contemplation, to dwell and feast a bad heart on others. . . . *Gain* and *vanity* have steered his little bark quite through life," etc.—*The North Briton*, No. 17.

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open to a fresh stroke," says George Steevens. "Being at that time very weak, and in a kind of slow fever, it could not but seize on a feeling mind," Hogarth himself admits, quoting the famous line, "Who steals my gold, steals trash," etc. Within eight months, however (May 16, 1763), Hogarth responded with his masterly etching, *John Wilkes, Esq.*, which is only less noteworthy than the *Simon Lord Lovat*. The impudent and ferocious leer on "the patriot's" face was not unflattering to Wilkes' vanity, who "frequently observed that he was every day growing more and more like his portrait by Hogarth." Four thousand copies were speedily sold. But Churchill, the satirist, "was exasperated at this *personal* attack on his friend," and replied by the "Epistle to William Hogarth," a very heavy performance, which the town, of course, took very seriously.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Never did Hogarth scourge Vice and Folly more severely than the tremendous Drawcansir Churchill has in this Epistle scoured the unfortunate Hogarth. All that the bitterness of resentment could dictate, or the malevolence of keenest satire inspire, is poured forth on the devoted victim."—*Critical Review*, vol. xvi., p. 134.

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Hogarth retaliated shortly afterwards with his plate, "The Bruiser, C. Churchill":—"Having an old plate by me, with some parts ready, such as the background and a dog, I . . . patched up a print of Master Churchill in the character of a Bear. The pleasure and pecuniary advantage which I derived from these two engravings, together with occasional riding on horsebaek, restored me to so much health as can be expected at my time of life." "It is generally believed that the stinging and pointed attacks that followed this [portrait of Wilkes] and others of his political works, so sensibly affected his mind, as to tend, in no small degree, to shorten the period of his existence," says Samuel Ireland. But we cannot be sufficiently grateful that this plunge into personal and party polemics came only towards the close of his life. Had Hogarth yielded to solicitations, "after the publication of *The Rake's Progress*, to design another series against Sir Robert Walpole, to be entitled *The Statesman's Progress*," he might have been seriously deflected from or hindered in his artistic career. The man of ideas and controversialist, always strong in him, would have been nourished

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at the artist's expense, and the *Marriage A-la-Mode* never have been brought to birth.

The *Sigismunda* (National Gallery) suffers from the accessories, the jewels, drapery, casket, etc., being a little florid. The idea of a woman weeping over a bleeding heart is a purely poetic one, and Hogarth's aim "to draw tears from the spectator" is defeated by Sigismunda's pose being consciously tragic, and not subtle in its betrayal of grief. Her expression, however, is psychologically true to the violent sorrow which must express itself in sudden and irrational action. The head has true nobility, and gives the lie to the words of Dr Morell,<sup>1</sup> the candid friend, whose remarks may, however, have been distorted by George Steevens. The whole episode of the uproar over the *Sigismunda* is a melancholy instance of critical spite on the part of petty and envious minds.

Hogarth's literary tendencies were strong to

<sup>1</sup> " . . . It was so altered upon the criticism of one connoisseur or another . . . that when it appeared at Exhibition, I scarcely knew it again myself, and from a passable picture it became little better than the wretched figure here represented," etc.



**HENRY FIELDING, ETATIS XLVIII.**

HENRY FIELDING  
FROM BASIRE'S ENGRAVING. FIRST STATE



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the last. *Time Smoking a Picture* (1761), the subscription ticket for the *Sigismunda* print, which last was not issued till thirty years later, is full of Hogarthian conceits, without any beauty of form. In *Credulity, Superstition and Fanaticism* (1762), which Horace Walpole, with his usual bad judgment, styles "For deep and useful satire the most sublime of all his works," the student will find the best example of Hogarth's teening ideas, annihilating the fundamental laws of aesthetics. Pages of eulogy have been written on the recondite symbols of this confused and involved satire on Methodism and Popery, of which our quotation is a sample.<sup>1</sup>

It is a relief to turn to the exquisite drawing of *Henry Fielding* (1762), engraved by Basire, a sketch from memory. *The Bathos* (1764) is again a jumble of literary conceits, deriving interest from the fact that it was Hogarth's

<sup>1</sup> "The figure of a pigeon impressed on the Methodist's brain is intended to intimate that if the Holy Spirit gets into the head instead of the heart, it will create that confusion of intellect described in the mental thermometer which rises out of it, and which is crowned by a dove on the point of a triangle."—*John Ireland.*

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farewell to art and life. True to his flag to the end, he entitled the print, “Finis, or the Tail-piece, the Bathos or manner of sinking in sublime Painting inscribed to the Dealers in Dark Pictures.”

Hogarth died 25th October 1764, of an aneurism, and was buried in Chiswick Church-yard. The verses inscribed on his tomb are by Garrick, but Dr Johnson’s emendation contains the happiest definition of Hogarth’s genius.<sup>1</sup> Hayley’s platitudinous “Epistle to an Eminent Painter” (Mr Romney) contains lines on Hogarth and Churchill, which show how a mediocrity may class great genius and facile talent together.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Hand of Art here torpid lies  
That traced the essential form of Grace ;  
Here Death has closed the curious eyes  
That saw the manners in the face.

<sup>2</sup> Science with grief beheld thy drooping age  
Fall the sad victim of a Poet’s rage ;  
But Wit’s vindictive spleen, that mocks controul,  
Nature’s high tax on luxury of soul :  
This, both in Bards and Painters, Fame forgives ;  
Their Frailty’s buried, but their Genius lives.



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